THE ROLE OF MONEY IN FRENCH COMEDY DURING THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV

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THE ROLE OF MONEY IN FRENCH COMEDY DURING THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV

BY

LEO ORVILLE FORKEY

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FOREWORD

The idea of making a study of the role of money in French comedy under Louis XIV germinated in a Seminar in which the author participated in 1939-40 on the Registres de la Comédie Française, for the years 1680-1701, conducted at the Johns Hopkins University by Dr. H. C. Lancaster.

The subject has already been dealt with in a general way by Hilda Norman in the first chapter of her book, *Swindlers and Rogues in French Drama*, which was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1928. The author proposes to go further into the role of money in French comedy during the reign of Louis XIV than Dr. Norman did, or could hope to do in one chapter of a book covering so extensive a period.

The study has been limited to the period between the death of Mazarin, March 8, 1661, and the death of Louis XIV, September 1, 1715, thus covering the period of fifty-four years during which Louis reigned as an absolute monarch without the guidance of a prime minister. Money does not come to play an important role in French comedy until the second half of the seventeenth century. The years just previous to Mazarin's death were largely occupied with the war with Spain which terminated in 1659, and the interest of the public was more in the direction of war and its heroisms than the more prosaic consideration of financial matters. The importance of money in comedy parallels the importance of money in French social life and history. Hence the period 1661 to 1715, which witnessed the zenith of the luxury-loving and egotistical Louis XIV with its accompaniment of large incomes and high taxes, reflects in comedy the unprecedented importance of money.

An attempt will be made in the following chapters to show how various manifestations of the role of money in French life under Louis XIV were reflected in French comedy of the period. For this purpose a division of topics has been made, each of which represents a particular element in the social and economic structure in which money plays an important role. The value of money and the scale of living as shown in the comedy of the period will be discussed. Finally, an attempt will be made to draw some general

conclusions as to the purpose of the introduction of money and its ramifications in French comedy during the reign of Louis XIV.

The author is particularly indebted to Dr. H. C. Lancaster for countless helpful suggestions. His *History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century* has been invaluable. In fact, without the ground work on French comedy presented in this work, the present study would not have been possible.

In addition to this, Dr. Leo Spitzer has been freely consulted on philological matters and Dr. Emile Malakis on bibliographical problems. Dr. F. C. Lane has been of great help in furnishing references regarding seventeenth century usury, bankruptcy and the general economic situation in the seventeenth century, and Dr. Henry T. Rowell regarding the latin "lena." The author desires to express his deep indebtedness to all of these professors for their guidance and counsel.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The building of Versailles, the upkeep of the Court and the development of new industries involved great amounts of money and it was inevitable that finances and financiers came to play a leading role in the French economic and social life of the latter half of the century. Vast sums of money were in circulation. The bullionist national policy of Colbert could be recapitulated under three heads: first, to increase the money in circulation by attracting it from other lands; second, to keep it in the kingdom by preventing its export; and third, to give the people a chance to make a profit from the money in the realm.[1]

From this circulation the royal treasury could get its share, for the authority of the King was so well established that people paid their taxes before they thought of paying rent, or even of buying necessities for themselves.[2] And, since the State had much, much might be taken from it. The largest fortunes of the period were gained not by commerce or banking, but by the corrupt use of official position. Colbert was a wealthy man when he died. Fouquet was at one time worth millions. Mazarin and his predecessor, Richelieu, were among the richest men in Europe.

As the revenues of the King were never sufficient to cover the expense of the domaine, he was forced to borrow continuously and to farm out the taxes. For example, in 1661, the royal revenues were 31,000,000 francs, but of this sum, 9,000,000 were needed for interest and other carrying charges.[3] This situation only became worse with time. By 1688 the public treasury was empty and there existed a deficit in the annual budget of 6,642,245 francs.[4] The tax collectors or *partisans*, had been known as early as the reign of Henry III when they had been described as " cette vermine de gens, que nous apelions partisans, ingénieux à la ruine de l'Etat, lesquels trouvaient à regratter sur toutes choses . . . pour s'enrichir en

[1] C. W. Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism*, I, 337.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 340.
[3] Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 301.
[4] Pierre Clément, *Le Gouvernement de Louis XIV*, p. 227.

leur particulier de la dépouille du pauvre peuple." [5] Richelieu had also said: "Les partisans forment une classe séparée préjudiciable à l'Etat, mais pourtant nécessaire; ce genre d'officiers est un mal dont on ne saurait se passer." [6] And Colbert, although the sworn enemy of financiers, had been forced to make the same confession. The popular opinion of the *partisan* is well expressed in the following extract from a song of the period: [7]

Prétends-tu, maudit partisan,
Le ciel pour récompense
Du vol du pauvre paysan
Et de toute la France?
Si Dieu te fait un jour pardon
A ton impertinence,
Ce sera comme au bon larron,
Au haut d'une potence.

Extremely strong under Marzarin, in spite of the Parlement, watched over and kept in check by Colbert, the partisans became all powerful after the death of Colbert, when the enormous expenses incurred by the wars made their cooperation necessary more than ever to the King.[8] Towards the latter part of the century they became important personages. In 1697 there were fourteen for the gabelles, fourteen for the traites, twelve for the aides and the domaines, all of whom constituted a society in itself.[9] In the seventeenth century, however, financiers and partisans entered the salons by the side-door, happy to be tolerated there, and although St. Simon called the reign of Louis XIV "un long règne de vile bourgeoisie," the distinction of ranks was severely observed. One would never have heard then the indignant words of a great lady regarding a ball given by Louis Philippe, "Il y avait des notaires!" However the third estate was definitely rising during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Its members were becoming fermiers-généraux, intendants, conseillers d'Etat, ministers, and the sons of dukes and peers sought the daughters of the latter in mariage.[10]

[5] Germain Martin, *L'Histoire du Crédit en France sous le Règne de Louis XIV.*, p. 133.

[6] Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

[7] Chanson Maurepas B. N. F. fr. 12.620 f 105.

[8] Maurice Lange, *LaBruyère, Critique des Conditions et des Institutions*, p. 327.

[9] Lavisse, *Histoire de France*, VIII, 173.

[10] Victor Du Bled, *La Société Française du 16ième au 20ième Siècle*, III, 2.

The tax measures used by the Government between 1650 and 1700 were many and varied and infinitely ingenious. The principal tax at this time was the taille, from which the clergy, the nobility and a large number of judges and financiers—in short, a large group of privileged persons, all of great means, were exempt. The gabelle was the tax on salt. The traites (customs duties) were paid not only at the French frontiers, but also at the borders of certain districts within the country. In addition there were a great many local tolls with a great variety of names: the "boues et lanternes," the "droit de septembre," the "petit et grand pied fourché," the "vingtain de caresme," the "chemins obliques," the "trop bu," the "traité d'Arzac," the "droit de Manicault," the "trépas de la Loire"; in Languedoc, the "patente du Languedoc" and the "denier de St. André"; in Guyenne, the "branche de cyprès" and the "guillage"; at Arles, the "liard du Baron"; at Marseille, the "table de mer"; in Rousillon, the "tarif catalan."[11] The aides (excise duties) were indirect taxes, chiefly levied on drink. And lastly there was the domaine or the King's estates and his feudal and seignorial rights. The gabelles, traites, aides and the domaines were all farmed by companies of financiers.

Usury was prevalent on all sides. Henry IV had set the legal rate at 6¼ in an edict of 1601, and Louis XIII, about three decades later, issued another edict reducing this rate to 5⅚ percent. Colbert in 1665 issued an edict limiting the rate to 5 percent.[12] Just before the war with Holland, the rate was raised again to the rate decreed by Louis XIII on money loaned to the King. Seven years later the rate was made applicable to all loans, and all promises to pay at a higher rate were declared null and void. It is true that these limitations were not strictly enforced, and the government itself borrowed at times at somewhat higher rates. Colbert was motivated in these edicts by the thought that by making the legal rate of interest low, he would thus drive investors to put their money into business and commercial enterprises which would benefit France and from which the investors could expect a higher return.[13]

A gambling mania swept through the entire period of fifty-four

[11] Boulenger, *The Seventeenth Century*, p. 331.
[12] Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism*, I, 361.
[13] Cole, *op. cit.*, I, 361.

years. Mazarin had been the first to make it popular.[14] It was claimed he used certain games to ruin his enemies. *Le Joueur*, a comedy by Regnard, became less a caricature than a faithful portrait. Laws were made against gambling, but they were impossible to enforce. The passion for "le jeu" took possession of all. The turbulent Marquis, the peaceful bourgeois and the banker's wife all came together around the gambling table.[15]

In order to attract the small savings of the peasants and the artisans, national lotteries were set up. Private lotteries which offered competition were strictly forbidden but needless to say, they flourished.[16]

Under such conditions the effects of money were indelibly stamped upon the French soul. To the peasant, it was one thing—and that a bad one—deprivation, oppression, ignorance and poverty—all caused by the relentless squeezing of money for taxes by the King's collectors. To the bourgeois, it was another thing. Here by hard work, prudence, foresight, and sound judgment, a fortune had been slowly and methodically accumulated and these same virtues had to be persisted in if that fortune was to be preserved. The Parisian bourgeois of 1660 was extremely careful of his money. He knew all too well how hard it was to make and how easy to lose, and he became inordinately attached to the only thing that meant power in his world.[17] To the noble it meant something entirely different. Money for him meant the continuance of the luxury of Court life and a hedonistic style of living. To secure it, he stopped at nothing. Hence the mad gambling, borrowing at usurious rates of interest, and the seeking of wives among the daughters of the wealthy bourgeoisie who possessed large dowries.

LaBruyère aptly satirized the money-mad Frenchman of the period in the following lines:[18]

> Il y a des âmes sales, pétries de boue et d'ordure, éprises du gain et de l'intérêt, comme les belles âmes le sont de la gloire et de la vertu; capables d'une seule volupté, qui est celle d'acquérir ou de ne point perdre; curieuses et avides du denier dix; uniquement occupées de leur débiteurs; toujours

---

[14] Martin, *L'Histoire du Crédit en France sous le Règne de Louis XIV.*, p. 200.

[15] Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[16] Lavisse, *Histoire de France*, VIII, 178.

[17] Chapman, *Spirit of Molière*, p. 214.

[18] LaBruyère, *Des Biens de Fortune*, I, 264.

inquiètes sur le rabais ou sur le décri des monnoies; enfoncées et comme abîmées dans les contrats, les titres et les parchemins. De telles gens ne sont ni parents, ni amis, ni citoyens, ni chrétiens, ni peut-être des hommes, ils ont de l'argent.

It was impossible for public morality to escape from this contagion of money and its power.[19] The fact that life was harder, taxes heavier, the price of offices higher, made consciences less scrupulous and more eager to share in the profits of the money schemers. The wealth of the newly rich and their insolent display of this same wealth caused havoc in the great mass of the people. All wanted to rise in life, all wanted to become rich in no matter what way, and thus ambition, vanity, and the "désir de paraître" undermined the national character. If a financier was successful, the nobles hastened to ask the hand of his daughter in marriage. If, however, he was not, they despised him as a bourgeois and paid no more attention to him.

This greed for money even reached ecclesiastical circles. The distribution of the "bénéfices" which were made on the days of the King's communion became a solemn function. On August 15, 1695, about three hundred priests came to Versailles in the hope of obtaining something. In one week alone the King distributed more than 500,000 francs of income in the form of "bénéfices."[20]

The French money play of the latter half of the seventeenth century is an element of great importance in the transition of French drama. From the strong emphasis placed on tragedy in the first half of the century, the pendulum swings to the comedy of character and the comedy of manners. Writers of plays turn to the complex economic and social conditions of the period for inspiration for their settings and prototypes of their characters. And since money was all important and those who possessed it all powerful, it is only natural that wealth played a dominant role in the comedy of the period and that financiers, rich bourgeois, and impoverished nobles, together with all sorts of rogues, thieves, and gamblers, took the leading roles.

The same defects in the national life and character that caused a Bossuet and a Bourdaloue to become irritated, indignant and

[19] Lange, *LaBruyère, Critique des Conditions et des Institutions*, Introduction, p. xxxiii.

[20] Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

desperate, made a Dancourt and a Regnard laugh and furnished [21] them with inspiration for their comedies. And in the case of Regnard, he himself was a great gambler and could draw upon his personal experiences for material for his plays.

DuFresny in *Le Négligent* (Prologue, Scene 3) was not far from wrong when he says: " C'est l'argent qui fait le nœud de l'intrigue; et le plus ou moins, fait le dénouement." This role of money with its various ramifications in the world of business and society as reflected in comedy will be discussed in the coming chapters.

The general state of affairs during the reign of Louis XIV is reflected in a bitter and cynical fashion. The struggle for individual gain was the order of the day. As Molière expressed it in his *L'Ecole des Femmes* (III, 2):

> Car, dans le siècle où nous sommes,
> On ne donne rien pour rien.

This sentiment found its echo some twenty-two years later, in 1685, in *La Bourgeoise Madame* (III, 5):

> Dans ce siècle maudit on ne fait rien pour rien.

The key note of self-interest which LaRochefoucauld upheld so firmly as the basis of all human endeavor is struck in St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps* when Merlin declares (I, 12): " chacun est pour soi dans ce tems-ci." This same feeling pervades the whole period and, of course, was continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The utility and importance of money was recognized by all. For Horace in Molière's *L'Ecole des Femmes* (I, 6):

> . . . l'argent est la clef de tous les grands ressorts,
> Et que ce doux métal qui frappe tant de têtes,
> En amour, comme en guerre, avance les conquêtes.

Hauteroche, in *Le Deuil*, enlarges a bit on this same theme, as is shown in the following conversation between Crispin and Timante in the fourth scene of the first act:

Crispin:

> D'ailleurs, comme le monde est plein d'ambition;
> Et suivant que chacun par argent se gouverne,

---

[21] Lange, *LaBruyère, Critique des Conditions et des Institutions*, Introduction, p. xli.

Si le diable en ces lieux venoit tenir taverne,
Qu'il voulût enrichir ceux qui boiroient chez lui,
La foule seroit grande.

Timante:

Il est vrai qu'aujourd'huy,
Passât-on en vertu les vieux héros de Rome,
Si l'on n'a de l'argent, on n'est pas honnête-homme;
Il en faut, pour paroître.

Crispin:

Aussi, pour en avoir,
Il n'est ressort honteux qu'on ne fasse mouvoir,
Loix, justice, équité, pudeur, vertu sévère,
Par-tout, au plus offrant, on n'attend que l'enchere;
Et je ne sache point d'honneur si bien placé,
Dont on ne vienne à bout, dès qu'on a financé.

Paris is a fine place, providing one has money. Thus in *Ulisse et Circé* (I, 6), when Pierrot asks Arlequin what sort of a place Paris is, Arlequin replies that it is a wonderful place "quand on y a de l'argent." He adds that if perchance one does not have any, since there are so many dupes there, it is not difficult to acquire it with a little wit and industry. As Pierrot is still curious, Arlequin goes on to explain:

Il est vrai, avec de l'argent on y trouve de tout; un homme de la plus basse naissance, sans esprit, et avec toutes sortes de mauvaises qualités y est respecté et recherché, pourvu qu'il fasse bien de la dépense.

General dishonesty and disrespect for the law are rampant everywhere. According to Dorante in St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps* (III, 11):

Le marchand pille le public, le procureur vole ses parties, le gentilhomme plume le paisan, la jeune coquette ruine son amant, un Chevalier ruine une vieille coquette et tout ce qu'il y a d'honnêtes gens font-ils scrupules de s'aproprier le bien d'autrui, quand ils peuvent le faire sans craindre les reprimandes de la justice.

This vicious circle is only reiterated in LeSage's *Turcaret* (I, 11). Here Frontin remarks:

J'admire le train de la vie humaine! Nous plumons une coquette, la coquette mange un homme d'affaires; l'homme d'affaires en pille d'autres; cela fait un ricochet de fourberies le plus plaisant du monde.

Money has upset the whole system of social caste. According to Marthon in *Les Petits-Maistres d'Eté* (I, 5):

> L'épée, la plume, le manteau, la mandille, pesle mesle sont boulversez. L'honneste homme tombe dans la pauvreté, le scelerat s'eleve aux dignitez, le Maître devient valet, le valet devient Maître, c'est un boulversement perpetuel, et vos parens ne sont pas les seuls qui se boulvarisent.

In *Esope* by LeNoble (III, 1), men are placed according to their merit with the laconic remark added "c'est-à-dire selon l'argent."

Generally speaking, the wealthy made every attempt to hide low birth and often bought titles of nobility. The significant remark made in Dumas Fils' *La Question d'Argent* (I, 4), in 1857, by the Countess: "Il a passé le Rubicon des parvenus. Il a avoué son père," could never apply to the seventeenth century.

The apology of acquiring wealth by any means, dubious or otherwise, is to be found in Dancourt's *Les Agioteurs* (II, 9). Here Dargentac answers the question of the morality of ill-amassed fortune by saying:

> Excusable, Monsieur? tout le monde l'est. La fortune porte son excuse avec elle. Par quelque route qu'on la fasse, quand elle est faite, on n'a jamais tort.

This interest in money was particularly strong at the turn of the century. In Dancourt's *Les Bourgeoises de Qualité* (1700) in the "Divertissement" at the end of the play, we find a peasant saying:

> Que la fin de ce siècle est belle
> Pour quiconque a bonne moisson,
> De bon vin, maîtresse fidèle
> Et des pistoles à foison.

CHAPTER II

Various Manifestations of the Role of Money

Bankruptcy

Bankruptcy, both legitimate and fraudulent, was a common occurrence in seventeenth century France, and there are many allusions in comedy to its popularity.

At the instigation of Richelieu, a sweeping investigation had been made of the decline of commerce at Marseille. One of the causes given in the report submitted was the frequent bankruptcies of the merchants.[1] Another report regarding the decay of commerce at Lyon, made about 1650,[2] spoke of the "horrible quantities of bankruptcies."

Fraudulent bankruptcy was everywhere prevalent, and the general claim was made that foreigners were more frequently guilty than native-born citizens.[3] The Code Savary of March, 1673, through which Colbert hoped to reform and standardize business practice, provided the death penalty for fraudulent bankruptcy.[4] Although this extreme penalty was not always carried out, the punishment was usually severe. In his *Parfait Négociant*, Savary himself describes in detail the punishment of Jean François LeMercier, a merchant guilty of fraudulent bankruptcy, and his accomplice Jean-Baptiste Desues.[5] The two offenders were publicly humiliated in the streets of Paris, and, after paying heavy fines, were sent to the galleys for nine years.

Bankruptcy, particularly fraudulent bankruptcy, is employed in comedy mainly to add realism. It is another aspect in the transition from the comedy of character to that of manners. As an economic condition growing from dubious probity and the desire for great wealth, it finds its place in the increasing number of

[1] Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism*, I, 197.

[2] Manuscrits Français, No. 18,591, fol. 19-24; cf. Forbonnais, *Recherches et Considérations sur les Finances de France*, I, 281-283.

[3] Cole, *op. cit.*, I, 38-39, 93.

[4] Cole, *op. cit.*, I, 360.

[5] Jacques Savary, *Le Parfait Négociant*, II, 29.

comedies of manners written in the latter half of the seventeenth century, which reflect money and its social effects. It plays its most important role in comedy in the decade 1680-90. The two main plays of the period which are concerned largely with it were written shortly before the death of Colbert (Champmeslé's *La Rue St. Denis*, 1682) and a few years afterwards (Fatouville's *Le Banqueroutier*, 1687).

Evidence is found in regard to the widespread popularity of bankruptcy. Thus, in DuPerche's *Les Intrigues de la Vieille Tour*, we find Crispin (I, 10) suggesting to Monsieur Toxin that he go bankrupt in order to better his affairs. He adds:

> . . . Pourquoi non aujourd'huy c'est la mode
> Et l'on n'en voit que trop suivre cette methode.

It was also a common way quickly to gain immense wealth. In Hauteroche's *Le Feint Polonais* the statement is made (I, 2):

> . . . quand on fait ce qu'en bon François on appelle banqueroute, on n'est pas si fou de ne la faire que pour une seule somme; et c'est souvent par-là qu'on enrichit les familles.

Bankruptcy was even repeated more than once by the same individual. In St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps* (I, 4) two merchants argue regarding their respective business reputations. One claims he is the more honest as he has been bankrupt only twice, while the other has gone through bankruptcy four times. In Lesage's *Crispin, Rival de son Maître*, Crispin (I, 2) bewails his position as a valet and envisions a fine career he could make for himself in the financial world. With his wit, he claims, he would already have been bankrupt more than once.

Fraudulent bankruptcy and financial cleverness were considered inseparable. Thus Durillon, after conversing with Trapolin in Dancourt's *Les Agioteurs* remarks (II, 11):

> Le bon négoce que celui de Monsieur Trapolin! S'il avisoit de faire banqueroute, elle seroit diablement frauduleuse.

The first bankruptcy to be mentioned during this period is a very simple and naïve one. In *Le Zig-Zag*, a short play presented with *Le Baron de la Crasse*, a servant, Catin, speaks of the comparative luxury she lived in until her husband became bankrupt. This disaster occured only because her husband borrowed twenty francs (I, 4) "comme s'il eust presté trois blancs." As he was

unable to pay when the creditor demanded the money, he was forced into bankruptcy. Then (I, 4):

> Tout ally sans dessus dessous
> J'aviesme emprunté, faly randre,
> J'aviesme acheté, faly vandre;
> Bref, enfin final, tout sauty;
> Dieu sçait si cela nous couty.

Molière used bankruptcy as an accessory to the plot of his *Les Femmes Savantes*. Here it is used as a method to break up the marriage of Trissotin and Henriette. Ariste, Chrysale's brother, brings in fake evidence to the effect that Argante and Damon with whom his property has been placed are now bankrupt (V, 4). In the same scene he brings equally reliable evidence to the effect that Philaminte has lost a law-suit and must pay the sum of 40,000 écus. These pretended reverses are enough to cause Trissotin, a scheming fortune hunter, to give up Henriette and she is then united with the man she really loves.

Fraudulent bankruptcy as a practice is depicted at length in two comedies. The first is Champmeslé's *La Rue St. Denis*.[6] Here Armosin, a merchant, and Guindé, his clerk, connive together in a false bankruptcy to dupe the creditors and secure a profit for themselves. Armosin leaves Paris and Guindé is set up as the principal creditor. This pair had previously drawn up a "contrat de société" by which Guindé had put a considerable sum as an investment in the company with the provision that he, Guindé, was not responsible for any of the debts incurred. In addition Guindé had given Armosin another secret written agreement that this considerable amount was actually Armosin's (which, of course, was the case), and guaranteed it to him in the final settlement. When the bankruptcy was announced, the creditors all flocked to Guindé, who showed them that most of the property was his, and then abandoned the rest to them, which they divided "au sol le livre" —the equivalent of settling for five percent in modern parlance.

The second is Fatouville's *Le Banqueroutier*, the play that best reflects the practice. The plot concerns the ambitions of Monsieur Persillet, whose spendthrift wife has reduced his once great fortune to two hundred thousand francs. A notary, ironically named M. de la Ressource, advances a plan whereby he can make a million.

[6] A well-known commercial street in Paris near the Quartier des Halles.

M. de la Ressource is an expert in handling "affaires délicates." He explains these in the Scène du Notaire as:

> . . . de savoir à point nommé vieillir un hypotêque, corriger un testament, amaigrir une obligation, mettre sur pied une contre-lettre; et pardessus cela avoir de reserve plusieurs bons modeles de banqueroute. Rien n'est si couru presentement.

Persillet and de la Ressource bargain about the fee. The former suggests 25,000 écus at first and finally raises his offer to 200,000 francs. De la Ressource refuses, saying he wants one third, and adds that he sometimes gets as much as one half. Persillet agrees to pay one third.

The details of the scheme are revealed completely in the Scène du Notaire. De la Ressource explains that Persillet's affairs are in just the right condition for bankruptcy:

> Il faudroit mettre du côté de l'épée le million que vous cherchez pour marier votre fille, acheter un duché, et établir votre fils. Dans le crédit où vous êtes, voilà trois hameçons capables de prendre toutes les duppes de Paris: car afin que vous l'entendiez, quand on veut faire son coup, il faut être dans cette odeur de fortune et d'opulence.

It is then bruited about that Persillet, although wealthy, will condescend to take money to advance his various interests. When the prospective lenders arrive, they are purposely made to believe that Persillet only deals in big sums. He will not even take the trouble to give a receipt for 14,000 francs he had received that morning. He has to be urged to take the money which, so secure do the lenders feel in the probity of Persillet, they let him have "au denier vingt-cinq," or four percent interest. Persillet consults with his wife to see if she is hard enough to go through with the proceedings. He explains (Scène de la Banqueroute):

> Si vous êtes pitoyable, la banqueroute est flambée. A ce métier-là il faut une ame plus dure que l'acier.

Persillet even persuades himself that his trickery is honest. He assures his wife heaven will help them for in this bankruptcy they are only trying to secure the future of their children and the means to live the rest of their days "selon leur condition."

Persillet then disappears, as agreed upon, and the creditors are in consternation. The ever-obliging notary tries to help them reach a solution of their difficulties. He urges them to settle for the

funds, some four hundred thousand francs, that Persillet has invested in a company to bring the water of the Ourcq river to Paris. To this they eventually agree.

Disaster almost falls upon Persillet, for his "cassette" containing all his profit is stolen. A Prince,[7] however, appears and wants to marry Isabelle, Persillet's daughter. He brings the coffer with him and a marriage contract is signed. Persillet's chief creditor has now learned of his trickery and is about to have him arrested when he finds out that the so-called Prince de Chimère is in reality his own son. Seeing that his family will only profit by the marriage contract, and that it will be all lost with the arrest of Persillet, he gives up his plan, so that Persillet never pays the full price of his trickery. His daughter, however, is now affianced to a doctor's son, hence a bourgeois, and this, of course, is a blow to his pride, as he had harbored much higher aspirations.

Fraudulent bankruptcy is again referred to in Boursault's *La Comédie Sans Titre*. The occasion for it is Monsieur Longuemain's call upon the editors of the *Mercure Galante* (II, 4). Monsieur Longuemain has stolen two hundred thousand francs from the taxes he has collected. When he is called a thief by Oronte, he retaliates that his method of acquiring money was more honest than that of using bankruptcy to defraud.

> Mais combien en voit-on, Banqueroutiers parfaits,
> Vivre du revenu des crimes qu'ils ont faits?
> Pour un à qui l'on fait ces injures atroces,
> Plus de dix à Paris ont deux ou trois Carosses.
> Qu'un homme ait de bien clair jusqu'à cent mille écus,
> On luy preste sans peine un million, et plus:
> Chacun ouvrant sa bourse, à sa moindre requeste,
> Luy jette avec plaisir son argent à la teste;
> Et quand ses Creanciers redemandent leur bien
> L'emprunteur infidelle abandonnant le sien
> A la face des Loix fait un Vol manifeste;
> Et pour cent mille écus un million luy reste.

An incident depicting the technique of false bankruptcy occurs in LeSage's *Turcaret*. Here (III, 7), Turcaret's agent, M. Rafle, tells him about a certain "caissier" who has just gone bankrupt for 200,000 écus. Turcaret, however, is not alarmed. He starts

[7] Cf. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Molière made similar use of a person disguised as a foreign prince.

to say: "C'est par mon ordre qu'il . . ." and finishes by saying cryptically "je sçai où il est."

Counterfeiting

There was evidently a great deal of counterfeit money in circulation under Louis XIV. The Registres de la Comédie Française occasionally show amounts under the designation "Défalque," which are entered among the sundry expenses of a performance.[1] There are also frequent allusions to it in the plays themselves. In connection with the theatre admissions just mentioned, Dorimond's *La Comédie de la Comédie ou Les Amours de Trapolin* has reference to light weight or counterfeit money. This play consists of a prologue and an inner play. The prologue has no plot, but is composed of a series of scenes depicting theatrical life. In Scene III at the end of the prologue, the doorkeeper is portrayed watching out for counterfeit coins:

> Ce teston est-il bon? Cette piastre est legere,
> Ils sont sans conscience, ou bien ils n'en ont guere,
> Des qu'ils ont des testons qui ne sont pas de poids,
> C'est pour nous que l'enfer les chaufe de son bois;
> Pour faire auec ces gens le Portier d'importance,
> Il faudroit dans mes mains tousiours vne balance.

In Molière's *Ecole des Femmes*, one of Arnolphe's servants speaks of "deux écus d'or qui n'étaient pas de poids" (III, 1), which Horace had previously given him.

In Champmeslé's *Les Fragmens de Molière*, the famous scene of Don Juan and M. Dimanche from Molière's *Don Juan* is reproduced. Gusman's farewell to M. Dimanche (II, 5) contains the following: ". . . Bon soir et bonne nuit. Belle maniere de payer ses Créanciers. On ne nous rapporte ni argent faux, ni pistoles legeres. . . ."

[1] An examination of the records for a typical year (1694-1695) discloses the following amounts entered as "Défalque":

April	24	1	sous	
Oct.	29	5	sous	
Feb.	5	18	sous	
Feb.	6	5	sous	6 deniers
Mar.	13	7	sous	
Mar.	18	10	sous	

The practice of counterfeiting was a fairly common one. Certain members of the nobility even indulged in it, and even the clergy became involved at times.[2] The Marquis de Termes was imprisoned several times in the Bastille on this indictment. The Marquis of Charnacé was arrested in 1698, on a counterfeiting charge in complicity with a certain Père Moquet, an Augustin monk. From 1660 to 1693 more then five hundred counterfeiters were hanged. Counterfeiting was so general, of course, because it was remunerative, and even the terrible sentences imposed for offenders were not enough to discourage them.

But few plays of the period introduce counterfeiters as characters. One of the most sordid characters in the comedy of this period is Fine-Epice of *Le Mariage de Fine-Epice* by Jean de Ste. Marthe. He is by profession a shyster lawyer, but his activities extend to many other fields of the seventeenth century underworld. To him (I, 2) "La Vertu n'est que vanité: la richesse a bien d'autres charmes." . . . "Selon qu'il apporte d'écus, le Mariage est honorable." He is proud of his profession practiced without ethics (I, 1):

> Ceux qui parlent de moy, m'appellant chicanneur,
> Au lieu de m'offencer, me font beaucoup d'honneur,
> En parle qui voudra, ie dois à la chicanne,
> Tout ce que i'ay de bien, ma robbe, et ma soutane.

One of the many tricks in his bag is a method of counterfeiting, which he describes as follows (IV, 5):

> Mais sans vous offencer, j'en ay qui sont plus beaux,
> Pour decaper Venus la methode est commune,
> Mais je la sçay changer en belle et fine Lune,
> I'ay sur Saturne et Mars un secret sans pareil,
> Ie leurs fais prendre et l'œil, et le poids du Soleil,
> Mon operation est si rare, et si belle,
> Que ma matiere tient une heure à la coupelle,

To aid their experiments in alchemy the Docteur and Cinthio in *Les Souffleurs* engage Colinmatras who has previously worked for two counterfeiters (I, 17). The first employer could change one silver mark into two by adding "de l'arsenic, de l'étain, du vif

[2] Germain Martin, *Histoire du Crédit en France sous le Règne de Louis XIV.*, p. 195.

argent, du plomb, de l'alum, mille drogues et son train." However, the other goldsmiths got jealous of him and reported him to the police, who first put him in jail and then hanged him. The second employer made louis from gold leaf. He shared ultimately the fate of the first employer.

One of the most humorous characters in all seventeenth century drama is Arlequin, the counterfeiter in Regnard's *Le Divorce.* He very naïvely (I, 2) confesses "je me jetai malheureusement dans les médailles." When Mezzetin, with whom he is speaking, thinks he means "dans les antiques," Arlequin adds:

> Non, dans les médailles; c'est-à-dire que quand je n'avais rien à faire, pour me désennuyer, je m'amusais à mettre le portrait du roi sur des pièces de cuivre, que je couvrais d'argent, et que je donnais à mes amis pour du pain, du vin, de la viande, et autres choses nécessaires; mais comme il y a toujours des envieux dans le monde (voyez, je vous prie, comme on empoisonne les plus belles actions de la vie), on fut dire à la justice que je me mêlais de faire de la fausse monnaie.

Speaking in about the same vein, Arlequin continues that "la justice m'envoya prier de lui parler." When Mezzetin humorously asks if "la justice" sent pages, Arlequin calmly replies that they were all gentlemen of great distinction and quality. They even had a carriage waiting for him at the door. Arlequin at first explained that he was busy and suggested to them that he would gladly go some other time, but that finally he had to yield to their assiduities. He was then taken and introduced to five or six "visages vénérables." In reply to their questioning as to whether it was really he who had this "heureux talent," Arlequin replies that he hopes with time to become more skilful in his work. This remark evidently amused the judges immensely, but nevertheless, they condemned him to be hanged. He escaped this by asking permission to drink at a fountain, then jumping in and sliding back into the Seine through the water pipe!

Laws against hoarding old coins that had been withdrawn from circulation existed in the seventeenth century. This is made use of as an accessory to the plot in St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps.* Here Merlin, having exhausted all attempts to beg or borrow money from Araminte, appears disguised as an "Exempt de la Monnaye." He claims he must make a thorough search of her apartment (III, 12):

Pour mettre en liberté quantité de pauvres vieilles espèces d'or et d'argent, qu'au prejudice des ordonnances vous retenez injustement prisonnieres, j'ai ordre d'en faire la confiscation, et de vous condamner en outre à une amande de six mille livres.

Merlin's disguise is discovered, but in the meantime he has found out that she does have fifteen thousand francs worth of old coins in her possession. He then proposes (IV, 4) to go to the mint and denounce her.

The strongest denouncement of counterfeiters as a class is to be found in Molière's *L'Etourdi ou les Contretemps* (II, 6). Here Anselme attempts to get certain money back by pretending some of the coins are not good. The speech in which he makes this attempt ends with the lines:

> De nos faux monnayeurs l'insupportable audace
> Pillule en cet Etat d'une telle façon,
> Qu'on ne reçoit plus rien qui soit hors du soupçon.
> Mon Dieu! qu'on ferait bien de les faire tous pendre!

The " Femme D'Intrigues "

The " femme d'intrigues " was not a new type of character to appear in the drama of the seventeenth century. The procuress often played a role in Greek comedy,[1] which was carried over into Roman comedy in the characterization of the " lena." In addition to her functions as a procuress, she also plays a didactic role in Roman Literature, giving her charges instruction in the art of love. In Ovid, *Amores* (I, 8), she stresses the importance of receiving gifts and money in return for favors.[2] She even recommends borrowing money, and never returning it, as one way of securing a gift.[3] In Spanish Literature Trotaconventos of the Archpriest of Hita's *El Libro de Buen Amor* and the protagonist of the *Celestina* continue this tradition. For the early seventeenth century in French Literature, Régnier's *Macette* furnishes the notable prototype of the procuress or go-between for lovers. The earliest characterizations of the "femme d'intrigues " in the reign of Louis XIV adhere fairly closely to the role of matrimonial agent. How-

[1] Phillippe E. LeGrand, *The Greek New Comedy*, p. 92.
[2] Ovid, *Amores*, I, 8, v. 77.
[3] *Ibid.*, v. 105.

ever, towards the close of his reign, we find that her activities have become much more complicated. In addition to arranging marriages, she deals in all sorts of business transactions. In some of the characterizations there is a strong picaresque element. The theatre also reflected popular interest in fortune telling, astrology, and black magic. Plays such as Thomas Corneille and deVisé's *La Devineresse* owned much of their popular interest and appeal to this factor.

One of the first of these women to appear on the stage from 1660 to 1715 is Ruffine, a character from Chappuzeau's *Avare Duppé*. The name "Ruffine" aptly suggests her personality. Philippin (I, 4) describes her as:

> Ruffine, dont l'esprit n'eust iamais son pareil,
> Madrée au dernier point, belle comme vn soleil,
> Qui iouë et va grand train, qui s'habille en Princesse,
> Et dont le reuenu n'est qu'intrigue et qu'addresse.

Ruffine is not a matrimonial agent. She has a definite place in the intrigue and might be called more of a "picara" than a "femme d'intrigues." She plots with three of the characters to get Crispin's gold and is of great service by winning his affections. In the end she shares the spoils with her co-plotters.

In Molière's *L'Ecole des Femmes* (IV, 5) Arnolphe voices his suspicions of the activities of various business women who, under the appearance of legitimate female undertakings, serve as go-betweens in love affaires. He especially wants kept out of his house and any possible contact with Agnès:

> Vendeuses de rubans, perruquières, coiffeuses,
> Faiseuses de mouchoirs, gantières, revendeuses,
> Tous ces gens qui sous main travaillent chaque jour
> A faire réussir les mystères d'amour.
> Enfin j'ai vu le monde, et j'en sais les finesses.

Frosine,[4] in Molière's *L'Avare*, is one of the best characterized, most lively and entertaining "femmes d'intrigues" in this period. Her role here is that of a matrimonial agent, although she will

[4] A Frosine had previously appeared in Molière's *Le Dépit Amoureux* (1656) as Ascagne's "confidente." She is a much more important character than the average "confidente" and is of great service to Ascagne in the intrigue of the play.

strive to obtain money by almost any means. When she is asked what her business is (II, 5), she says:

> Ce que je fais par tout ailleurs: m'entremettre d'affaires, me rendre serviable aux gens, et profiter, du mieux qu'il m'est possible, des petits talents que je puis avoir. Tu sais que, dans ce monde, il faut vivre d'addresse, et qu'aux personnes comme moi le ciel n'a donné d'autres rentes que l'intrigue et que l'industrie.

Later on she reveals her capacity as a matrimonial agent (II, 6): ". . . et je crois, si je me l'étais mis en tête, que je marierais le Grand Turc avec la République de Venise." She is infinitely ingenious and bold in her dealings with Harpagon. She plays on the latter's susceptibilities and makes great progress, but she fails to get money from him to aid in her lawsuit.

Appearing two years later in de Visé's *Les Intrigues de la Lotterie* is Clarine, another matrimonial agent. She is also interested in lotteries. When (I, 6) she is asked in her first entrance in the play what her business is, she replies " comme dix mille fous, demander mes billets," but further conversation with Florine, the servant, reveals her true purpose in entering the house. It is to introduce Clidamis into the household. The latter is in love with Florine's mistress, Clarice. Clarine bribes the servant by saying " Nous gagnerons de quoi mettre à cent lotteries " and it is arranged that Clidamis is to come into the house to see Clarice under the appearance of being interested in the lottery.

Molière's Nérine, appearing in *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669), is listed among the " Personnages " as " femme d'intrigue, feinte Picarde." She serves to advance the intrigue of the play and by posing as a " Picarde " helps to prevent the marriage proposed for Monsieur de Pourceaugnac.

Sbrigani, (I, 4) in speaking of Nérine, characterizes her as follows:

> Je suis confus des louanges dont vous m'honorez; et je pourrais vous en donner avec plus de justice sur les merveilles de votre vie, et principalement sur la gloire que vous acquîtes, lorsque, avec tant d'honnêteté, vous pipâtes au jeu, pour douze mille écus, ce jeune étranger que l'on mena chez vous; lorsque vous fîtes galamment ce faux contrat qui ruina toute une famille; lorsque avec tant de grandeur d'âme vous sûtes nier le dépôt qu'on vous avait confié; et que si généreusement on vous vît prêter votre témoignage à faire pendre ces deux personnes qui ne l'avaient pas mérité.

Nérine replies:

Ce sont petites bagatelles qui ne valent pas qu'on en parle et vos éloges me font rougir.

In 1685 in St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps* we meet Madame des Martins. Here the role of femme d'intrigues has become much amplified. She still deals in marriages, but the technique of operation has progressed. Madame des Martins even has an apartment where she arranges little intimate suppers for her clients to meet in privacy. She cultivates both "la Robbe" and the "gens de Finance." In this particular play she attempts to arrange a marriage between Damis, a rich but miserly partisan, and Angélique, a young girl whom Damis' son wants to marry. We learn a great deal from her about the light morality in certain circles. When asked how the marriage brokerage business is progressing, she replies (II, 4) that most of the young people do without it.

On ne fait plus rien; le mariage se décrie de jour en jour, et la plûpart des jeunes personnes prennent aujourd'hui le parti de le suprimer.

She adds that the young officers of the day feel they have so much right to other people's wives that they are not interested in taking one of their own. She leads old Damis on by flattery and much cajoling. Damis is impatient to visit the girl, but Madame des Martins restrains him. She tells Damis she fears the interference of the girl's brother. Here she does a typical trick of the women of her class, and suggests he loan this brother money, for, incidentally, he has gambled and has a position in the army to maintain. When the brother fails to return the money, he will feel obligated to Damis and so agree to his sister's marriage.

In addition to the Damis-Angélique situation, Madame des Martins has also another affair in hand. It is that of Araminte, Damis' sister, and Angélique's brother, the Chevalier. Araminte is madly in love with the latter, who is only looking for money. Their conversation (II, 10) follows:

Araminte: Mais pendant cette intervalle-là Mr. le Chevalier, je ne pretens pas que vous aimiez personne.

Le Chevalier: C'est de cela qu'il s'agit Madame des Martins; il est question de faire un bail de cœur en attendant le contract de mariage, je veux louer le mien cent pistoles par mois, est-ce trop Madame des Martins?

Des Martins: C'est le meilleur marché que vous en puissiez faire assurement.

The three finally draw up a formal contract to this effect.[5] The terms are (1) the parties swear to love each other faithfully until the marriage day; (2) Araminte will have no rival in the Chevalier's affections, in return for which she will " faire prés du cavalier toutes les reparations necessaires autour d'un homme de qualité, selon les us et coutumes de Paris "; (3) every year Araminte shall give the Chevalier her portrait, garnished with the largest brilliants possible; (4) the Chevalier is to receive a " pot-de-vin " of a diamond worth one thousand écus; and finally (5) Araminte shall pay quarterly to the Chevalier the sum of one thousand pistoles a year. The Chevalier is delighted with this arrangement which furnishes him with so much ready money, and comments: " Madame des Martins est divine."

The" femme d'intrigues " par excellence of the period is Madame Jobin of *La Devineresse* by T. Corneille and de Visé. She is the literary counterpart of the famous La Voisin[6] who had been arrested for her activities in black magic, abortions, and poisons and was subsequently burned to death. Because of this source and the effort to take advantage of the notoriety of La Voisin, she differs from the usual characterization. Madame Jobin's sole purpose in all her magic and trickery is to extract money from her clientele of dupes. Her craving for money is insatiable, but it is not so difficult to understand when one considers she has no family nor love interests. She has absolutely no sympathetic interest in the misfortunes of those who come to consult her. Her only thought is to obtain information from her clients themselves or through exterior sources that will enable her to proceed with her trickery. In two scenes of Act 5 Mme Jobin speaks alone and the

[5] Cf. *L'Astrée*, Book 9, part 3. Here Hylas and Stelle arrange a contract with thirteen promises. Money, however, plays no role in their affections.

[6] La Voisin had been mentioned in T. Corneille's *L'Inconnu* (III, 2):

Virginie: Comment? vous allez bien chez Madame Voisin?
En sait-elle plus qu'eux?
Comtesse: J'y vai par compagnie.
Virginie: Mon Dieu, comme à beaucoup, C'est là votre manie.
Les femmes ont ce foible, on ne les peut tenir.

La Jobin is referred to as a famous sorceress in *La Fausse Coquette* (II, 7):

Arlequin: Je suis petit-fils de Medée, frere de Circé, cousin Germain d'Urgande et oncle a la mode de Bretagne, d'Armide et de la Jobin.

greed which is the central motivation of her character is firmly expressed:

C'est autant de pris. Quand il reviendra, j'inventerai quelque conte qui l'obligera peut-être à ouvrir encore sa bourse. (V, 3)

Pourvû que la bourse vienne, il importe peu comment. Quelle folle avec sa peur! (V, 11).

Her fees vary and are determined largely by what she thinks the traffic will stand. The lowest is a single gold coin and they mount as high as one hundred pistoles (to see the devil) and three hundred louis.

References are made to la Duverger in two plays appearing in 1700. One of these is Dancourt's *Les Bourgeoises de Qualité* or *La Fête de Village.* In this instance La Greffière has been to consult her (II, 3) and proclaims that, however much others may blame the "devineresse," as far as she is concerned, she is well satisfied. La Duverger has promised her good fortune with the turn of the century.

Another reference to La Duverger is made in Regnard's *Le Retour Imprévu* in regard to a house which Merlin purports to be haunted in order to keep Géronte from going there. It is in an attempt to drive the devils from the house that la Duverger has been consulted (I, 13):

Nous avons vu là-dessus les meilleures devineresses de Paris, la Duverger même; il n'y a pas moyen de les faire déguerpir.

Dancourt presents a "femme d'intrigues" in his *Bourgeoises à la Mode* who goes a little beyond the characterizations presented thus far, in that she feels a strong maternal love. A "marchande de modes" by profession, Mme Amelin loves her worthless son in spite of the fact that he passes her off to his socialite friends as his "mère nourrice" and actually steals from her. She is not above receiving stolen goods (a diamond I, 6) nor padding the bills she gives to her clients (I, 9):

Ah que voilà une brave dame! Ne se pas donner seulement la peine de lire des parties! Si toutes les autres étoient comme elle, j'aurois bien tôt de quoi faire rouler un bon carosse.

The redeeming element in her character is her boundless love for her son. In the end she forgives him everything and takes pride in his success, although she does not condone his dishonesty. He

gets her blessing and the offer of an office worth 20,000 écus when he marries Mariane.

The " femme d'intrigues " of Regnard's *Le Joueur* is very aptly called Madame Ressource, and her role in the play is to furnish " ressources," usually at exhorbitant rates of interest. When Valère (II, 14) says he understands she will lend money " sur gages " she is insulted:

> Sur des gages, Monsieur? c'est une médisance;
> Je sais que ce serait blesser ma conscience;
> Pour des nantissements qui valent bien leur prix,
> De la vieille vaiselle au poinçon de Paris,
> Des diamants usés, et qu'on ne saurait vendre,
> Sans risquer mon honneur, je crois que j'en puis prendre.

Hector had previously referred to her (I, 6) as:

> cette honnête usurière
> Qui nous prête, par heure, à vingt sous par écu?

She makes her appearance dressed in black. Valère queries (II, 14) if it is not court mourning? But Madame Ressource is not to be flattered. She comes out flatly with the statement that she is a bourgeoise with no pretentions whatsoever to the nobility.

She is extremely wary in dealing with Valère and does not loan him any money until she has received Angélique's diamond-studded portrait for security. This action is a fatal one for Valère because in the last act Angélique who is exasperated with Valère's failure to give up gambling completely loses confidence in him when she learns he has given up possession of her portrait. She dismisses him completely and marries Dorante, a steadier, if not as romantic a suitor. Hector's farewell words to Mme Ressource (V, 10) are:

> Adieu, tison d'enfer, fesse-mathieu femelle!

Dancourt's *La Femme d'Intrigues* appeared in 1692. It is a comedy of manners with a slight plot centering around the activities of Mme Thibaut. A good presentation of the more complicated role that the " femme d'intrigues " is now playing is depicted in this play. We learn from LaBrie (I, 1) of Mme Thibaut's many and varied activities:

> . . . Il se fait ici les plus belles affaires de Paris: voulez-vous des Charges, des Offices, des emplois? On vous en fera voir de tous les échantillons. Estes-vous dans le goût de vous marier? On vous y fournira des

femmes de toutes tailles, de tous âges; et si vous plaidez, vous y trouverez des Solliciteuses depuis une pistole jusqu'à trente: voilà ce qu'on appelle une bonne boutique; il n'y a point ici de nenni. Mais, mon zéle l'emporte sur ma curiosité . . .

There are two doors to her house. Through the little door she carries on her business as a "femme d'intrigues," but through the larger porte-cochère she becomes the widow of a Conseiller de Bretagne who has just come to Paris. She hopes by this latter ruse to marry Cléante, a Gascon who pretends to be an infantry captain. The magnificence of her furniture, the richness of her jewels and the abundance of her silverware (all of which come from her business dealings and are with her only temporarily) make her appear to the captain to be a very good match indeed. The captain is in reality a scoundrel and a fortune hunter by the name of LaRamée who courts Mme Thibaut under false pretenses. Both are unmasked in the end, Mme Thibaut through one of her clients and LaRamée by the captain himself.

The play is largely concerned with a kaleidoscopic procession of rogues, adventurers, people with fantastic ambitions and fortune hunters. It presents a distinctly sordid picture of the society of the time. Pretense and insincerity, greed and profit are the order of the day. Everything and everyone have their price. The wide variety of appeals made to the talents of Mme Thibaut create several interesting, if apparently unconnected scenes. Mme Thibaut is by far more talented and clever than any of her predecessors. All is grist that comes into her mill. When one of the musicians leaves her with a small child on her hands concealed in a bass viol, she is at first a bit non-plussed, but quickly turns the affair to a profit (IV, 12). A widower appears who has lost his own child and thus stands in danger of losing his wife's estate. Mme Thibaut furnishes him with another. She tries to arrange a marriage between a sixty year old woman (Mme Torquete V, 8) with many children and a bad cough, who has lost her husband some months ago, and Eraste, a "petit-maître" who needs money. When Mme Torquete hears a list of Eraste's debts and when Eraste reads a list of Mme Torquete's illnesses and medicines, both quickly become disillusioned. A man calls seeking a position in the Gabelles (I, 2). Another wants help in obtaining a patent for a "fard à l'épreuve de tous les temps." In a particularly amusing scene a woman calls requesting aid in getting elected to

the French Academy. She has composed sonnets and madrigals and wants to revolutionize the Code and law procedure. Monsieur de la Protase, an unsuccessful actor, has prepared a " Placet au Roy," prohibiting " sifflets " and requests help in getting the prohibition put into effect. When LaBrie, disguised as a Notary, talks with Mme Thibaut (II, 3), he complains that his income has dwindled because so many couples get married now under " seing privé " because of the high cost of the contract. Various possible investments are discussed. One is to put 2,000 pistoles on a young man to enable him to buy a carriage and so marry the widow of a partisan. The other is to lend money for the construction of a new Opera House.

Mme Thibaut pursues her occupation relentlessly. Usually it is she who deceives but occasionally she herself is dupe. Her major mistake, of course, is her failure to discover LaRamée's imposition. Angélique (II, 6), dressed as a man, calls on her. She is urged to accept a woman with an income of 25,000 francs as a wife. When Angélique objects " si cela n'obligeoit pas à résidence " Mme Thibaut outlines a schedule that will only require a period of six weeks residence with the woman in question. Then Angélique reveals her true identity. But Mme Thibaut has been completely fooled and the audience must have enjoyed this immensely.

Mme Thibaut was a perfectly normal woman at heart. She thought her profession a very tiresome one and only wanted to give it up and get married (III, 13):

> La fatigante chose que le métier dont je me mêle! Si j'étois bien sûre de Cléante, je prendrois le parti d'y renoncer; mais dans l'incertitude de pouvoir réussir dans mes affaires, il est toûjours bon de continuer à me mêler de celles de tout le monde.

Another Frosine as a " femme d'intrigues " appears in Dancourt's *La Foire de Besons*. She loves money above all things. (I, 3). Here her function in the play is that of a Celestina. Tax collectors are among her most intimate friends. She is bribed (I, 15) into aiding the marriage of Eraste and Mariane, the daughter of M. Griffard, a tax collector. This bribe is accomplished by literally blackmailing her with a few chapters from her past:

> Tu baisses furieusement, je ne te connois plus; moi, qui te parle; et où est ce feu, cette vivacité, cette ardeur exempte de scrupule que je t'ai toujours vûë jusqu'à présent? Quoi, cette illustre Frosine qui a elle-même

enrôlé son mari pour avoir le plaisir d'être plutôt veuve, cette heroïne, qui pour s'approprier le petit bien de sa famille a fait mettre son frere aux petites Maisons, et envoié son oncle aux galères? Je ne parle point de sa nièce qu'elle a très avantageusement mariée à un riche Magistrat, qui n'est pourtant pas veuf encore . . . cette même Frosine.

At the close of this speech Frosine is ready to do anything required of her. She introduces herself into the house of M. Griffard and makes the acquaintance of his daughter Mariane. Then by the ruse of a tricked contract, the marriage is arranged.

Paralleling the Frosine in Molière's *L'Avare*, although not as well developed, is Mme Brichonne of Dancourt's *Les Enfants de Paris*. She acts as agent for Harpin in his usurious dealings and all such transactions are conducted in her name. If we are to believe her own words (II, 1), she is acquainted with most of the current Parisian scandal:

Hé, fi donc, si j'etois tant soit peu babillarde, un bon tiers de Paris seroit deshonoré.

The last "femme d'intrigues" to appear before the death of the King in 1715 is Madame Clopinet of Dancourt's *Le Vert Galant* which appeared in 1714. She is a marriage broker, but there is here an eighteenth century modern touch, for she arranges her marriages by mail (I, 3). Her practice is to send the girl's portrait in exchange for the man's. Then the love affair progresses through the mail.

The Gambling Mania

Games of chance had developed in France in the Middle Ages as a distraction from the boredom of a sedentary life in the castles during the periods when there was no war. The church put its stamp of approval upon them when the games were conducted for the purpose of constructing cathedrals or providing for the upkeep of monasteries.[1] In the seventeenth century, gambling first became widespread in the army camps where the soldiers, like the nobility of the Middle Ages, used games of chance to relieve a humdrum existence. The passion for gambling spread from the army camps to the French populace in general.[2] It grew by leaps and bounds

[1] G. Armynot du Chatelet, *Les Jeux et les Loteries Autorisés en France*, pp. 23-24.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

in the course of the century, and was influenced by the vast amount of money in circulation. Under Louis XIV gambling had a prominent place at Court; from there it spread throughout the city of Paris, and later to the French provinces. Edicts of the "Parlement de Paris" were promulgated to stop it under the dates of July 6, 1661, September 16, 1663, March 29, 1664, November 23, 1680, January 15, 1691 and February 8, 1708.[3] The Government took strong measures to enforce these laws, and a fine of three thousand francs was imposed on offenders, one third of this fine going to the King, one third to the poor, and the other third to the informer through whose efforts the infraction had been brought to the attention of the officials.

The universal interest in gambling is found reflected in comedy more completely, perhaps, than any other manifestation of the role of money. As will be developed in the following pages, several plays are "comédies de mœurs" in which gambling, with its ramifications in the lives of the gamblers, forms the central and unique theme. It is an important element in the transition of the comedy of character to that of manners.

The presentation of gambling and its social effects persists throughout the entire period, but it is particularly strong at the turn of the century. More plays make use of this manifestation in the decade 1690-1700 than in any other during the reign of Louis XIV. In almost all cases dramatists have used gambling to introduce an element of contemporary reality and interest into their plays. Gambling games in progress, methods of cheating at cards, the effects of the prohibition of lansquenet and other aspects of gambling are all shown on the stage with vivid realism. This depicting of manners is the first consideration of the authors and any attempt at moralizing or preaching is incidental and secondary.

From the plays discussed on the following pages, it is possible to obtain an excellent picture of the gambler, male and female, and the operations and social implications of this particular manifestation of the role of money in French life, as reflected in comedy. The plays will be discussed in order of importance, beginning with those which have the gambling mania as the central theme and proceeding to other plays which depict gambling, but are not concerned primarily with it.

[3] Armynot du Chatelet, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Perhaps the most vivid picture of the gambling mania in the comedy of the period is to be found in Regnard's *Le Joueur*. Regnard himself was a gambler, and hence in a position to draw upon his personal experiences in depicting the practice in his play. The protagonist is Valère. To him it is an incurable passion, and he can no more do without it than a confirmed drug addict can get along without his drug. He describes his felicity as follows (III, 6):

Hector, en vérité,
Il n'est point dans le monde un état plus aimable
Que celui d'un joueur: sa vie est agréable;
Ses jours sont enchainés par des plaisirs nouveaux;
Comédie, opéra, bonne chère, cadeaux:
Il traîne en tous lieux la joie et l'abondance;
On voit régner sur lui l'air de magnificence;
Tabatières, bijoux, sa poche est un trésor:
Sous ses heureuses mains le cuivre devient or.

Here Hector, his valet, interrupts him and says in the manner of a Sancho Panza:

Et l'or devient à rien.

Undaunted, however, Valère continues:

Chaque jour mille belles
Lui font la cour par lettre, ou l'invitent chez elles:
La porte, à son aspect, s'ouvre à deux grands battants.
Là, vous trouvez toujours des gens divertissants;
Des femmes qui jamais n'ont pu fermer la bouche,
Et qui sur le prochain vous tirent à cartouche;
Des oisifs de métier, et qui toujours sur eux
Portent de tout Paris le lardon scandaleux;
Des Lucrèces du temps, là, de ces filles veuves,
Qui veulent imposer et se donner pour neuves;
De vieux seigneurs toujours prêts à vous cajoler;
Des plaisants qui font rire avant que de parler.
Plus agréablement peut-on passer la vie?

Hector adds:

D'accord. Mais quand on perd, tout cela vous ennuie.

As long as he is winning, he knows no other love than gambling, but when he has lost everything, he begins to love Angélique. This love for Angélique never lasts very long, for he always finds money in some way or other to continue. He loses Angélique in the end

and is heart-broken for a short time, but he soon makes up his mind to return to the gambling table (V, 12):

Va, va, consolons-nous Hector; et quelque jour
Le jeu m'acquittera des pertes de l'amour.

Seneca (IV, 13) consoles him when he loses money.[4]

Géronte (I, 7) comments on the frantic gambling of the period:

Non, à présent le jeu n'est que fureur:
On joue argent, bijoux, maisons, contrats, honneur.

A new character to appear on the stage in connection with gambling is the professional[5] who teaches others his tricks. In Regnard's *Le Joueur*, this character is portrayed in the person of M. Toutabas, "Docteur dans tous les jeux, et Maître de Tric-Trac." When he comes on the scene (I, 10), he mistakes Valère's father for Valère, and proceeds to tell of his profession.

De quoi sert, je vous prie, une foule inutile
De chanteurs, de danseurs, qui montrent par la ville?
Un jeune homme en est-il plus riche, quand il sait
Chanter ré mi fa sol, ou danser un menuet?
Paiera-t-on des marchands la cahorte pressante
Avec un vaudeville ou bien une courante?
Ne vaut-il pas bien mieux qu'un jeune cavalier
Dans son art au plus tôt se fasse initier?
Qu'il sache, quand il perd, d'une âme non commune,
A force de savoir, rappeler la fortune?
Qu'il apprenne un métier qui, par de sûrs secrets,
En le divertissant, l'enrichisse à jamais?

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[4] Regnard mentions "chapitre six. Du mépris des richesses." The general idea he expresses can be found in Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, Liber Sextus, III. Fournier in his *Vie de Regnard*, p. x, of his *Oeuvres complètes de Regnard*, traces one of his verses: "c'est posséder les biens que savoir s'en passer" to a line of Seneca's twenty-ninth epistle: "Summae opes, in opia cupiditatum." Dr. Lancaster (*A History of French Dramatic Literature*, Part IV, p. 741) calls attention to the fact that Regnard may have had in mind Malherbe's translation of Seneca's *Epistles*, XIV, 6, which contains many of the ideas which Hector reads in the first passage.

[5] A Comte d'Arcigny, who had appeared in an unpublished play, *La Bassette* (1680), gave instructions in the principles of "la bassette." This play, having met with no success, was never published. A detailed summary of the plot, made by Martin, the apothecary of the Hôtel de Condé, has been published by Gustave Mâcon, who discovered this document (J. F. Privitera, *Charles Chevillet de Champmeslé*, pp. 78-79).

Géronte replies that, if one becomes rich, many others are ruined entirely. Toutabas is delighted with this, for it gives him the occasion to explain that, with a knowledge of his art, it is not necessary to lose. He continues and describes various means of cheating and thus assuring success. Géronte then orders him out:

Maître juré filou, sortez de la maison,

and later

Sortiras-tu d'ici, vrai gibier de potence?

Valère, in fact, was so fond of gambling that he changed his valet's name, which was Richard, to Hector, the jack of diamonds.

Closely paralleling Regnard's *Le Joueur,* but written in prose,[6] is DuFresny's *Le Chevalier Joueur.* Le Chevalier (the counterpart of Valère in *Le Joueur*) is, in addition to being an inveterate player, a superstitious one. For example, he remarks (IV, 9):

J'ai remarqué que je gagne sept fois de suite.

From Frontin (II, 3) we have confirmation of what had already appeared in previous gambling plays regarding the hours played, particularly by the women:

Il est neuf heures, Monsieur, et toutes les femmes reglées sortent du Lansquenet dès cinq heures du matin, pour s'aller coucher de bonne heure.

According to La Comtesse (II, 4):

La passion du jeu est un abîme de désolation, tout se perd dans ce gouffre, le tems, l'esprit, la joye, la santé.

To this Frontin significantly adds:

Vous oubliez l'argent, c'est ce qui va au fond du gouffre.

One of the most fanatic of the gamblers in the comedy of the period is Mme Orgon of DuFresny's *La Joueuse.* Before she started gambling she was, according to her husband (II, 3): "Polie, gracieuse, enjouée," but her violent passion was the occasion for a

[6] As mentioned by Dr. Lancaster (*History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century,* Part IV, p. 758), George Jamati has discussed the relationship of these two plays to each other in *La Querelle du Joueur,* Paris, Messein, 1936. He concludes that since both authors worked together at first on the same subject, each author subsequently believed that the other had robbed him. This is, at least, the charitable explanation.

complete metamorphism. This passion has become a monomania for she has completely lost all sense of honesty or honor. Her husband and herself have long been separated because of it. She has entirely neglected her daughter, and placed her in a convent. The intrigue of the play centers around the marriage of her daughter Jacinte, who has been left a dowry of twenty thousand écus by her first husband. Jacinte has two suitors, one an aged and wealthy chevalier, and Dorante, his heir, young but without fortune. Mme Orgon borrows money from the chevalier and promises her daughter to him. Later on, however, she takes back this promise. In her passion for gambling, the sanctity of a promise means absolutely nothing. She steals her daughter's dowry, and promptly loses it. Fortunately, however, Dorante is the person who wins it from her. She always has the best of intentions, and firmly believes she will recoup her losses, and set all right again (II, 7):

Mais en vingt-quatre heures ma fortune peut changer; j'ai remarqué que le bonheur m'attend toujours à ma derniere pistole, je suis pourtant bien par-delà.

There is something sensual about her pleasure in winning (IV, 13):

L'or me rafraîchit le sang comme l'eau de poulet; je sens couler cet or-là dans mes veines: quelle volupté!

When Triolet (II, 9) presents his bill for fifty louis for two years music lessons, Mme Orgon first says "L'éducation d'une jeune fille est si précieuse qu'on ne peut la payer." Then she proposes to gamble with him for it. When Triolet refuses, she refers him to her husband for payment.

Scene five of act one has an excellent description of gambling as seen through the naïve eyes of Jacinte, who has just come home from a convent:

Je cherchois ma mere; on m'a dit, elle est là-dedans qui joue: bon, bon, ai-je dit, elle en sera de meilleure humeur; car quand on joue, je croyois, moi, que c'étoit comme au couvent à la récréation, on joue pour se divertir, mais j'ai vû que le jeu de ma mere, c'étoit une querelle; on faisait un tintamarre, et tout d'un coup on a fait silence; ma mere tenoit des cartes, et elle en tiroit une tout doucement, tout doucement: dès qu'elle a été retournée, il y a eu une femme qui a fait un cri, et la querelle a recommencé: on a refait silence, et ma mere a retourné une autre carte; c'est à celle-là que j'ai eu bien peur: c'étoit des hommes comme des yvrognes; et un autre (qui faisoit le possedé avec des grimaces de rage) est venu de toute sa force enfoncer au carreau de vitre avec sa tête qui a passé à travers. Ah! Frosine, comment ma mere peut-elle vivre dans un enfer comme cela?

Lisete, the maid (II, 8), comments on the table manners of gamblers. For a table cloth, they are satisfied with the "tapis-vert." The lack of silverware means nothing to them. They take salt with the corner of a card. They pass the roast chicken around in the air, and each takes off a piece. They drink with one hand, and play cards with the other. Sometimes they eat cards with the bread. All of which the maid deplores, for how can she perform her duties and bring any order out of such chaos?

Dancourt's *La Désolation des Joueuses* has as its central theme the prohibition of lansquenet. The slight intrigue is taken care of in the first three and the last two scenes, the remaining nine being given over to the "désolation" caused by the remaining nine lansquenet. According to this play, lansquenet was the only gambling game affected by the decree, but other games, such as "piquet," do not serve to console the players.

The incidental value of lansquenet to a great many people is brought out in Scene ten. If a woman was given a jewel of considerable value, her husband could say nothing, for she could give as an excuse that she had won the money at lansquenet. If a son borrowed money at usurious rates of interest and lived on a grand scale, the father was happy in the thought that his son was lucky at lansquenet. It also enabled the reputation of a woman to be protected under the guise that she went out to play lansquenet.

The next development of the play is (Scene 12) the consideration of ways of evading the law. One proposes to play on the roof, or in the cellar; another in the Faubourg St. Antoine, where there are several old abandoned buildings; another, perhaps the most novel suggestion, to play on a boat on the Seine between Paris and St. Cloud or Rouen. As early as Scene five, the players had thought of going to England, "un Pérou . . . et la plupart de ces milords ne savent que faire de leur argent." When England is exhausted: "nous passerons en Hollande. Il y a de bonnes bourses en ce pays-là."

This play differs radically from DuFresny's *La Joueuse* in that it does not present any actual scenes of gambling in progress. But the same note of fanatic interest and passion is struck and we are led to the same conclusion regarding the monomania for gambling in certain classes of Parisian society of the time.

Chronologically speaking, the first play of the period, however, to be based entirely on the gambling mania is LaForge's *La*

Joueuse Dupée ou l'Intrigue des Académies. Here the plot evolves around the character of Uranie, a consummate gambler. She mocks those who are afraid to lose (I, 4):

> Ce n'est pas là l'humeur de la pauvre Uranie:
> La perte ny le gain, le bien ny le malheur,
> Ne sont pas assez forts pour changer sa froideur;
> Elle sçait en user avec plus de franchise,
> Et l'on m'enleveroit jusques à ma chemise,
> Que je ne dirois pas un seul mot de courroux.

In her preoccupation with gambling, she even forgets that she is expecting a visitor (I, 1), for whom she had promised to hurry her preparations for keeping the appointment in order to have the pleasure of remaining longer at the gambling table. Her passion for "le jeu" is the one passion of her life and the welfare of her husband and daughter mean nothing to her. A marquis calls and we learn of his success in cheating at cards (I, 4). From him we learn also that the most inveterate gamblers of the time are women, in England, Spain, everywhere in fact. He then says that they are the most clever at cheating and tells of some of their ingenious tricks. These include the use of their feminine charms, cooperation in groups of three to trick unsuspecting and respectful males, and the art of concealing their gains and publishing their losses, so that players will risk larger sums with them. Polixène, a "précieuse," calls and wants to go to the theatre. As, of course, Uranie would rather play cards, an animated game begins. The women fight and accuse each other of cheating. Clidamant takes advantage of all of this to persuade Uranie's daughter to elope. Valère, Uranie's husband, discovers the plot, and when he learns they plan to marry, joyfully gives his consent and expresses the wish that Clidamant could take his gambling-mad wife in the bargain.

Minor romantic interest is provided by the servants, but the gambling motif again enters. Turlupin agrees to marry Lisete only on the condition that she will give up gambling. He threatens her in the last two lines of the play:

> Et dès ce mesme jour je dégage ma foy,
> Si tu prétends jouer avec d'autres que moy.

Gambling plays an important role in Poisson's *Les Femmes Coquettes.* Again the gambler is a woman, Flavie. She pretends

to be a pious "dévote" in order to obtain money from her uncle, who is very aptly named Docile. She spends this money at the gambling table, but Docile thinks his gifts are going to convents and charities. A significant statement (II, 5) is made regarding the comparative morality of debts incurred through gambling:

> Pour de l'argent Prêté l'on ne s'en fait que rire,
> Comme Madame dit; mais pour l'argent du jeu,
> Peste, un banqueroutier seroit digne du feu.

Two "pipeurs" or professional card sharps, are introduced for the first time in comedy, DuManoir and DuBoccage. Flavie is warned about them but she simply believes they are lucky "innocens." Later on (V, 9) they are caught, their earnings of eight thousand francs taken from them, and we learn from Docile they are going to be hanged as "fameux voleurs." A unique scene in this play is when Flavie puts on a basin filled with golden louis at a supper she is giving (V, 8). This elicits a variety of comments from those present:

> Sainte Hermine: Pour en avoir un peu l'on met tout en usage.
> Aminte: Il n'est rien avec luy dont on ne vieme à bout.
> Sainte Hélène: Rien ne resiste à l'or, c'est un passe-par-tout.

In I, 2, of *Les Bains de la Porte St. Bernard* by Boisfranc, Angélique and Colombine discuss the relative merits of "le jeu." Angélique cannot understand how people can get any real enjoyment in ruining one another, with no conversation other than the sound of money clicking on the table or in their pockets. Colombine retaliates by saying that she wonders what would happen if so many women did not open their homes as an "académie" to take in so many young scions and amuse them. Angélique immediately says that gambling is not an amusement, but rather "une liaison apparente de société" which, in reality divides them all, for it is the mortal enemy of good manners and the fatal knife which cuts the closest bonds of friendship. Angélique says she cannot find any enjoyment in watching the Chevalier de la Vallée cheat by marking the black aces with a red pencil, or Clitandre, who gets so impatient that he tears up or eats a pack of cards. But for Colombine, gambling is a rather pleasant spectacle. She enjoys seeing Ergaste at the first stroke of bad luck "emporter en même temps les amadis de deux femmes par une pirouette imprévue," or Elise, who has fainted because she has drawn the same card for the fourth time.

She adds that it is certainly not the worst passion to be feared in a husband. Everyone knows it is not gambling which ruins women, for they have a natural inclination for spending. She ends her remarks about gambling with the significant comment that women often use gambling as a cloak to cover up many "dotes étrangères."

In *Colombine Femme Vengée* by Fatouville, we learn that Sunday, "depuis le matin jusqu'au soir," was spent at gambling and was part of the social calendar of the lady of leisure of the period. The entire week was spent as follows (I, 1):

> le lundi à Vincenne, le mardi à l'opéra, le mercredi aux Italiens, le jeudi je cours le bal, le vendredi à la comédie françoise, le samedi je fais des visites, et le dimanche on joue chez moi depuis le matin jusqu'au soir.

St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps* stresses the important place gambling had come to occupy in the life of fashionable men and women of the period. Young men spent night after night until daybreak at the gambling table (I, 2). The young women (III, 2), after beginning their day at four in the afternoon, made their toilet, went to the "Opéra" or the "Comédie" and then played lansquenet or bassette until five in the morning.

The gambling mania was not confined to Paris, but extended to the provinces as well. In Dancourt's *Les Bourgeoises de Qualité*, Mme Blandineau defends gambling against her husband's remonstrances (I, 5):

> M. Blandineau: . . . Et pourquoi jouer, madame Blandineau?
>
> Mme Blandineau: Que voulez-vous qu'on fasse de mieux, et à la campagne, surtout? J'ai la complaisance de venir avec vous dans une chaumière bourgeoise, avec votre ennuyeuse famille: il se trouve par hasard dans le village des femmes d'esprit, des personnes de monde, de jeunes gens polis; il se forme une agréable société de plaisir et de bonne chère; c'est le jeu qui est l'âme de toutes ces parties; et je ne jouerai pas? Non, monsieur, ne comptez point là-dessus, et donnez-moi de l'argent, s'il vous plaît, ou j'en emprunterai: mais ce sera sur votre compte.

In Baron's *Le Rendez-Vous des Tuileries ou le Coquet Trompé*, there are delineations of the various aspects of gambling. We learn that the women who hold gambling parties in their houses are accused of doing so, not in order to gamble, but rather to get men to come to their houses. Du Laurier, a servant, comments as follows (I, 3):

Croyez-vous que vos domestiques (j'entends ceux qui sont affectionnés comme moi) croyez-vous, dis-je, qu'il leur soit agréable d'entendre le lendemain blâmer votre conduite, par ceux qui ne menent point un train de vie pareil au vôtre, et qui ne coinçoivent point qu'il y ait une espèce de gens à Paris, à qui le Soleil fasse peur? Croyez-vous enfin qu'ils pensent que c'est pour prier Dieu que vous passez chez vous les nuits avec les hommes. Qu'il soit honnête de les voir entrer et sortir à toute heure? Ces gens ne disent point que ces messieurs n'y viennent que pour jouer au Lansquenet; mais ils disent que vous ne jouez le Lansquenet, que pour faire venir ces Messieurs!

She concludes her remarks by saying that the servants are no longer left "le profit des Cartes," which spoils the effect of her preaching on the Marquise, who sees she is seeking her own material gain.

In Dancourt's *Les Bourgeoises à la Mode,* Maître Simon's second wife, Angélique, has social ambitions and likes to gamble. She attempts to create a gambling "académie" in her own house. We learn from Frontin (II, 2) of the various sorts of people who are anxious to gamble:

Oui, Monsieur, justement, deux Marquises, une Comtesse, un Partisan, trois Abbés, autant de faineans, ce Commis de la Douane et ce petit Epicier, sont au logis qui vous attendent.

Gamblers have a peculiar sense of honor, all their own. To Angélique her gambling winnings are sacred; they are "des fonds pour le plaisir," and are not to be touched to pay off debts or to pay for the necessities of life. M. Griffard who is in love with her, and wants to help her with her gambling losses is told by Lisette (III, 9) not to offend her by lending her money, but rather to send it with a forged letter saying he has cheated at cards and is sending her conscience money.

In Caillet's *La Loterie* Dorilas expounds his way of winning at backgammon when he has nothing (II, 3). Dorilas first plays for one pistole, his opponent putting his money on the table and Dorilas putting his "sur la parole." If he wins, he then proceeds to double and to triple his winnings, and in this particular case, he succeeds in pyramiding them up to a hundred louis. He does not, however, say what happens if he loses on any of these plays. Perhaps it would be a case of "he can lose nothing who has nothing to lose."

In Molière's *L'Avare,* there is supporting evidence regarding the

great affinity of women in particular for gambling. This comes from Frosine, who is depicting a future wife for Harpagon in the most glowing terms possible (II, 6):

. . . De plus, elle a une aversion horrible pour le jeu ce qui n'est pas commun aux femmes d'aujourd'hui; et j'en sais une de nos quartiers qui a perdu, à trente et quarante, vingt mille francs cette année.

Molière also refers to gambling in his *Ecole des Femmes* in the ninth of the marriage axioms which Arnolphe attempts to impose upon his ward, Agnès.

Toute femme qui veut à l'honneur se vouer
Doit se défendre de jouer,
Comme d'une chose funeste,
Car le jeu, fort décevant,
Pousse une femme souvent
A jouer de tout son reste. (III, 2)

In this same play (I, 1), Arnolphe, in speaking of some of the evils of the marriages of the day, calls attention to a practice which was to become more prevalent later in the century. This is the custom of wives who, having lovers who give them money and jewels, attempt to cover up their newly acquired wealth and magificence by claiming to have made large winnings at the gambling tables.

Champmeslé's *Je Vous Prends Sans Verd* has reference to the great popularity of lansquenet. When Julie (I, 1) learns of the supposed death of her husband, this fact serves to console her for having lost everything at this game. Reference is also made to the popularity of lansquenet with certain classes of the clergy.

In speaking of "abbés," (I, 5) Julie says:

Il n'est rien en amour pour eux d'impénetrable,
Le siècle a peu d'intrigue ou ne perce la leur,
Et comme au Lansquenet, ils y prennent couleur.

A female gambler, whose role is perhaps not as important as that of Mme Orgon, the chief character of Du Fresny's *La Joueuse*, but whose passion for gambling is equally strong, is Cidalise, in LeGrand's *Le Carnaval de Lyon*. Her hands literally itch to handle the cards (I, 12):

En attendant Monsieur le Marquis venés nous faire une petite bassette. Je n'ay point encore manié de cartes anjourd'huy, les mains me grillent, je vous l'avouë.

It is, in fact, the sole interest of her life (I, 17):

Moy Madame, dés qu'il n'est plus question de jeu, Je suis indifferente sur tout le reste: mangeons, dansons, chantons tout m'est égal.

Among other drugs and panaceas the "opérateur" or seller of quack medicines (I, 11) has a remedy for the lack of sleep so commonly experienced by players of lansquenet and bassette.

In Hauteroche's *Le Feint Polonais,* La Franchise (II, 1) attempts to find out the source of Des Valons' wealth. At first he suggests a past bankruptcy in the family, which Des Valons promptly denies and then affirms that he has earned it in the army and won it at gambling. La Franchise then speaks a tirade against gamblers:

Cela veut dire que, quand la dupe s'est rencontrée sous votre main, vous avez fait comme beaucoup d'autres, que vous avez plumé la poule sans crier. Les joueurs sont un peu corsaires et ne laissent pas échapper le pigeon, sans avoir de ses ailes.

In Dancourt's *Les Agioteurs* the Baronne Va Partout visits the agioteur, Trapolin, to borrow funds to continue her grand passion. She at first asks for money (II, 13), and is told by Trapolin he has none. He adds that all the mines of Peru could not suffice to make up for her losses. The baroness is incensed and replies:

Les mines du Perou, Monsieur Trapolin! Les mines du Perou! Dites les mines d'Auvergne, je ne vous demande que du papier; vous ne m'avez jamais donné autre chose, et le plus mauvais est le meilleur pour l'usage que j'en fais, je vous l'avouë.

After much heckling and menacing on the part of the Baroness, Trapolin says he will borrow some and give it to her the next day. But she is impatient for that very day, there is "gros jeu chez la comtesse" and she has to have a thousand francs. She promises to give her note for four thousand if he will bring two thousand additional francs tomorrow. Trapolin finally accedes and the baroness leaves in a happy mood.

LeSage characterizes the baroness' lover in *Turcaret* as an incurable gambler, continually in financial difficulties because of losses at lansquenet. As Marine remarks (I, 1):

Car il n'est pas de ces chevaliers qui sont consacrés au célibat, et obligés de courir au secours de Malte. C'est un chevalier de Paris; il fait ses caravanes dans les lansquenets.

In Le Noble's *Les Deux Arlequins* Isabelle, an orphan, makes her living by gambling. She is urged to marry and so have a less precarious livelihood. There is also allusion to the prohibition of lansquenet and bassette (II, 8):

> Depuis qu'une exacte police
> A defendu bassette et lansquenet,
> Le tapis fait mal son office.

One of the charges brought by Sotinet in Regnard's *Le Divorce* was that his wife turned their home into a gambling "académie." In addition to losing his money, she denounced the house to the police and Sotinet was forced to pay a fine of three thousand francs. To cap the ignominy of her act, Mme Sotinet received one third of the fine as "dénonciatrice."

The tax collector is parodied as a gambler in *Arlequin Phaéton*. Scene five contains the following:

> Phaeton: Qui est cet homme qui lui donne la main?
> Momus: C'est un receveur general, et le don Quichotte du lansquenet pour les dames.
> Phaeton: Que veux-tu dire?
> Momus: D. Quichotte étoit le réparateur des torts; celui-ci est le réparateur des pertes.

From the "Scene de l'Exposition du Sujet" of Delosme de Monchesnay's *La Cause des Femmes*, it would seem social prominence was attached to having to pay fines for infractions of the law prohibiting gambling.

> Vous ne savez donc pas que c'est la grand'mode? Vous avez un si bel example devant vos yeux. Pourquoi ce petit abbé de vos voisins fait-il servir depuis si long-tems sa maison de retraite aux jeux défendus? C'est qu'il épie l'occasion de payer une amende de mille écus, qui le rendra fameux pour toute sa vie; et cependent il plaindroit une épingle à son pere. Mais dans les occasions d'honneur, les plus vilains font gloire de ne pas passer pour ce qu'ils sont.

Another sidelight on gambling is shown in this same scene in the reference to the "noms de jeu" players frequently adopted. Colombine called herself Finette. Other names adopted were "le Chevalier Trichardin" and "le Colonel la Réjouissance."

The morality of gambling is also discussed, with particular reference to the honor of women who accept loans from male players to recoup gambling losses.

Gambling furnished occasion also for symbolic presentation. *Le Triomphe de l'Hiver* is a divertissement given by Damis, the rich tax collector in *Les Mœurs du Temps* by St. Yon. Various actors and actresses take symbolical roles. Among these are L'Amour, le Carnaval, l'Opéra, la Comédie and la Fortune du Jeu, "la déesse qui preside au lansquenet." The latter, in reply to a comment on her great popularity, replies (I, 1): "c'est peut-être parce que je suis un plaisir défendu." She is not, however, as popular with the Marquis. In fact, he damns her and reminds everyone that she is far from popular with the army, commenting on the number of poor officers who spend their time rather sadly in the barracks because of having gambled during the winter.

DuFresny's *La Joueuse* closes with a description of an "Opéra du Jeu" conceived by Triolet, the music master. It is to be in the manner of a tragi-comedy. The theatre is to represent the "Temple du Malheur" with a great number of gamblers stabbing themselves. The chorus will chant oaths and imprecations. The female gamblers will furnish the comic effect. The decorations will be rich at times in the course of the opera, and at other times poor. There will be a sacrifice to the "Dieu des Brelans" where the men will sacrifice their time, health, honor and glory, and the women will sacrifice, to quote the author: "que sçais-je moi, ces sacrifices-là sont si communs." From Hell will come the personification of "la Bassette," followed by "Pharaon." The ballet will consist of twelve young scions, dressed as army officers, and of twelve Gascons. They eventually will come together and strip the young scions of everything they have.

In addition to the plays already discussed, three lost plays deal with gambling. They are Champmeslé's *La Bassette* (1680), *Les Joueurs* (1683) and Hauteroche's *La Bassette* (1680).

An analysis is available, however, for Champmeslé's *La Bassette*.[7] The plot is largely concerned with Maisonneuve, a gambler, who has lost so much money at cards that he opens a gambling house to recoup his losses. To aid him, he takes into his house a Sicilian Count named d'Arcigny who agrees to teach the secrets of "la bassette." The intrigue seems chiefly to be concerned with Maisonneuve's attempts to obtain money with which to operate his establishment.

[7] Privitera, *Charles Chevillet de Champmeslé*, pp. 78-79.

As for Champmeslé's *Les Joueurs,*[6] the only information we possess is the stage directions. The *Mémoire de Mahelot* (p. 132) gives the following properties:

> Theatre est des maisons et, au fonds, une ferme. Il faut 2 tables, six chaise, six bourse plaine de jettons, deux sixains de carte, deux cornets, des dez, une pipe, de l'any et de la canelle, un tapis sur une table au 5 acte.

Neither an analysis of the plot, nor stage directions are available for Hauteroche's *La Bassette.*

GET-RICH-QUICK SCHEMES

During the reign of a monarch where there was so much money in circulation, it was inevitable that the promoter of get-rich-quick schemes should make his appearance. The Government itself had promoted schemes of its own, none of which bore much fruit. One manifestation of this was the formation of trading companies, fostered largely by Colbert. But his "Compagnie du Nord," created in 1669, the "Compagnie du Sénégal," created in 1673, and that of the "Levant," for which the Government had furnished the capital, had only a nebulous existence and did not produce any of the brilliant results Colbert had hoped to obtain.[1] It was really only after Louis' death in 1715 and particularly during the Regency, when the Law System came into being, that the really grandiose schemes with nation-wide participation were undertaken. With the death of Colbert in 1683 came the triumph of the war party and the complete abandonment of his financial policy, an action that was fatal to France, for it ended, thirty years later, with the gigantic disillusionment of Law and his system.[2]

Both the promoter and his schemes are found reflected in the comedy of the period, and do a great deal to add reality to those comedies in which they appear.

LaBruyère[3] had satirized the promoter, or "donneur d'avis," in the person of Ergaste: "Laissez faire Ergaste, et il exigera un droit de tous ceux qui boivent de l'eau de la rivière, ou qui marchent

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.
[1] LaCroix, *Dix-septième Siècle, Institutions, Usages et Costumes,* p. 296.
[2] Pierre Clément, *Gouvernement de Louis XIV,* Avertissement, p. 1.
[3] LaBruyère, *Les Biens de la Fortune,* I, 255.

sur la terre ferme: il sait convertir en or jusques aux roseaux, aux joncs et à l'ortie. Il écoute tous les avis, et propose tous ceux qu'il a écoutés."

Molière's *Les Fâcheux*,[4] as the title implies, depicts a series of bores, one of the most interesting of whom is Ormin, the seventeenth century promoter of dubious enterprises. All of Scene three, Act three, is devoted to his appearance. Great secrecy shrouds the opening of his interview with Eraste. A "grande affaire" has brought him to Eraste, and he has been forced to wait until the room was clear of eavesdroppers before he could attempt to speak. At first Eraste suspects that he has to deal with some lunatic who thinks he has learned the secret of alchemy, but Ormin assures him of the contrary. He is rather a modest promoter. Openly deriding those promoters who speak in terms of twenty or thirty millions, he limits himself to four. Finally he comes to the point and discloses his marvellous plan for creating a vast number of sea-ports on the shores of France. He uses as an argument the fact that, as the present sea-ports bring such vast revenues to the King, why not create a great many others? He does not succeed in making an impression on Ormin and finally asks for a loan of "deux pistoles" to be paid for from the proceeds of the scheme, which Eraste readily grants, considering himself lucky to get rid of this bore so quickly.

Appearing subsequently is Monsieur de Riche-Source, "homme d'affaires, français, chimérique en projets" of Saint-Evremond's *Sir Politick Would-Be*. With Venice as a background and with a group of international characters as companions, M. de Riche-Source seeks to interest people in his scheme to promote the circulation of gold. He advances the theory that it enriches every country that it passes through and proposes to "déboucher les canaux" (II, 4), which the Princes of the Orient have closed and thus prevented gold from freely returning to Europe. He unburdens himself at great length regarding his plan to Sir Politick, suggesting it be accomplished first of all by political negotiations and treaties, and, that failing, by war. Sir Politick becomes enthused and begins immediately to line up mentally his political

[4] This play was commissioned by Fouquet as a part of the grandiose entertainment he offered Louis XIV at his estate at Vaux. The lavish display on this occasion caused Fouquet's downfall for it made Louis wonder where Fouquet was getting all his wealth and was a factor in instigating the trial which led to his disgrace.

connections in London. The scene closes with both financier and politician equally enthused and the latter saying (II, 4): "Les gens qui ont d'aussi grandes affaires que nous dans la tête ne doivent pas s'amuser aux cérémonies. Trouvez-vous, s'il vous plaît, à mon logis ce soir." Domenico (II, 2) had a little previously very aptly characterized M. de Riche-Source as a "grand faiseur de projets pour les affaires d'argent." In the opening scene, M. de Riche-Source, describes his own country, France, as "le pays des affaires et de la fortune." At the end of the play both men are arrested. Their conversation had been overheard by Domenico, who sensed a plot to deliver Venice to the Turks. When the Tribunal finds they are harmless, they are set free. However, Sir Politick is highly incensed and declares he would rather be hanged as a conspirator than set free as a lunatic. M. de Riche-Source, in spite of his agressiveness in the financial world, shows himself more prudent, for he adds (V, 4): "Tout beau, Monsieur Politick, si vous avez envie d'être pendu, je ne l'ai pas, moi: fou ou sage, pourvu qu'on me sauve, je suis content."

Le Mariage de Fine-Epice by Jean de St. Marthe is one of the best plays to depict conditions in the French underworld life of the seventeenth century. It is not surprising to find a get-rich-quick scheme in it such as the Abbé du Bois, an ambitious rogue, describes to Fine-Epice, the arch-swindler of the play. The Abbé proceeds to tell about a fabulous "main de gorre," which, if properly made from a piece of mistletoe cut on New Years Day, wrapped in white linen and then buried overnight, has the power to triple the value of a two louis piece. Fine-Epice goes into ecstatic rapture over this miraculous hand; IV, 7 is a solioquy in five stanzas in which he sings its praises. This is, of course, pure fantasy.[5]

To those who had exhausted the opportunities of making a great fortune in France, the lure of the Indies with their unknown and exotic possibilities had great attraction. In Champmeslé's *Le Parisien* (II, 2), Jérome advises his son to seek his fortune in the Indies:

[5] But in actual life some of the schemes were scarcely less fantastic. A man by the name of Tessier claimed to have discovered a tin mine in the "butte" of Montmartre. Great public interest was aroused and many people put money into the enterprise. Needless to say only financial loss and disillusionment came from it all. Germain Martin, *L'Histoire du Crédit en France*, p. 204.

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Abandonnez la France, aussi bien ce Païs
N'est plus pour s'enrichir, ce qu'il étoit jadis,
Des procès épineux, la chicane est bannie,
La foi dans le commerce est par tout retablie,
La guerre est déclarée aux pâles Usuriers.
La Finance n'est plus en pillage aux Fermiers,
Le sort d'intelligence avec ses œconomes,
N'y fait plus qu'à pas lents la fortune des hommes,
Et comme au seul mérite il attache son choix,
Dans tout un siècle à peine en éleve-t-il trois.
Chez un peuple plus brute, où la simple ignorance,
Au milieu des trésors, languit dans l'indigence,
Allez, mon fils, allez par des soins diligens,
Profitant de l'erreur, où sont ces bonnes gens,
Vous ouvrir un chemin, aux fortunes heureuses,
Remporter de chez eux des Perles précieuses
Des Diamants de prix, des Rubis de valeur,
Et de l'or, des mortels le vrai chasse-douleur.

A typical Big-Business enterprise of the seventeenth century is to be found in the Scène des Créanciers of *Le Banqueroutier*. Monsieur Persillet is interested in a scheme to bring the Ourcq River [6] to Paris and to sell the water at a high price to those who need it. He is of the opinion that the project will clear one million francs. The work of development is very expensive, however, and for this he has advanced four hundred thousand francs. He expects to be reimbursed for this amount from the first water sold. Contracts for the sale of the water with the name of the purchaser and amount paid left blank have been printed. To Arlequin, this scheme is "de l'or en barre" [7] of which he wants to get control.

[6] Germain Martin in his *Histoire du Crédit*, p. 204, cites a case (Arsenal, fonds Bastille 10541 et 10576) among other actual get-rich-quick schemes of the reign of Louis XIV: "Un nommé Lemaire propose la construction d'un canal de la Marne à la Seine et latéral à la Seine. Il en enumère les avantages: dans chaque maison on aura de l'eau pour éteindre l'incendie, pour laver les rues, pour boire . . . meilleure que celle de la Seine qui reçoit les eaux des lieux communes. On aura des abreuvoirs, on fera des blanchisseries commodes en tout. On donnera des eaux aux jardins."

[7] Frequent use of this expression which was applied to transactions from which one was sure to make a profit are to be found in several plays of the latter half of the reign of Louis XIV. Fatouville's *Le Marchand Duppé* (I, 3) and Dancourt's *Les Bourgeoises à la Mode* (I, 5) are two other plays making use of this same expression. Another current expression with about the same meaning was: "c'est un Pérou." See *Le Divorce* (I, 7) and *La Tontine* (I, 5).

The theme of LeSage's *La Tontine*[8] furnishes material for one of the most novel get-rich-quick schemes of the period.[9] M. Trousse Galant puts 10,000 francs in the tontine, not in his own name but in that of Ambroise, a peasant, who is a bachelor sixty years old, yet appearing forty, and in exceptional health. A contract is made whereby Trousse-Galant will take the profit from the tontine if Ambroise is the sole survivor and in return will feed and lodge Ambroise for the rest of his life. M. Bolus is a pharmacist with whom Trousse-Galant, as a physician, has many relations. Trousse-Galant promises to marry his daughter to M. Bolus and to give her a dowry equal to half of the profits of the tontine. As M. Bolus naïvely remarks (I, 5): "C'est un Pérou que nous avons là" when he first sees Ambroise. There are complications, however, and Crispin tricks him. The latter finds out that Ambroise is a deserter from the army and, disguising himself as an officer, seizes him and takes him off. Finally a bargain is struck. Trousse-Galant agrees to give the same dowry to Eraste that he would have given to M. Bolus, provided Ambroise is not turned in.

Two plays during the period deal with alchemy. In one, Chappuzeau's *Le Riche Mécontent ou le Noble Imaginaire*, it is used to trick a miser into consenting to a marriage between his daughter Aminte, and Lysandre, who loves her. Hence the use of alchemy here is that of an accessory to the plot. Lysandre's description of his discovery is as follows (V, 3):

> Ie sçay ce qui se fait dedans chaque Element,
> Ie puis donner de plus d'assez bonnes enseignes
> D'avoir tout le secret de l'Estat des trois regnes,
> Dont (si i'excepte l'homme) on void le mineral
> En durée, en vertu ne souffrir point d'égal.
> I'en sçay tous les détours et les routes secretes;
> Ie connoy le rapport des métaux aux Planetes,
> De largent à la Lune, et de l'or au Soleil.

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[8] An association whereby the members agree to put in a certain amount of money and to share the interest thereon. Upon the death of a member, his share is ceded to the remaining. In this manner the last survivor is enriched by a considerable sum. The name "tontine" is derived from Tonti, the Neapolitan who invented these establishments.

[9] Though accepted by the actors in 1708, this play, withdrawn by the author, was not acted until 1732.

Les autres ne vont pas dans vn degré pareil;
Mars, Saturne, Venus, Iuppiter et Mercure
Sont d'vne moins parfaitte et moins noble nature,
L'vn est soûmis à l'autre, et tous soûmis à l'or.
Icy nul auant moy n'a pris si haut l'essor;
Hermes, le grand Hermes, Raymond Lulle, Tritheme,
Geber, Bacon, Rasis et Paracelse méme,
Ernest, Tycho-Brahé, Quercetan, Van Helmont,
Qui venu des derniers a fait le Rodomont,
Et Flamel et Clauber ces renommez Chymistes,
Ne sont auprés de moy que de méchans Sophistes.
Nul d'eux u'a iamais pû paruenir au grand but.
Ie le touche à la fin.

The plot of *Les Souffleurs* centers about an assembly of alchemists who gather to witness the transmutation of baser metals into gold. The play is a farce in the Italian manner with burlesque and slapstick. The two leaders are Cinthio and the Docteur. Cinthio has ruined himself to keep his experiments going. He has used practically every legal or illegal method of obtaining money known in the seventeenth century (Act I, Scene 15).[10] Among the people seeking entry to the meeting is a certain marquis who claims to have discovered the secret of making gold. But his gold is not yellow, but white. He upholds his own creation (II, 2):

C'est dans la blancheur que consiste la beauté de mon or. Est-il extraordinaire de voir de l'or jaune? Rien n'est plus commun; il n'y a pas un Partisan qui n'en regorge, mais l'or blanc a toûjours été si rare que l'on n'en a jamais vû paroître dans le commerce. Or vous sçavez que c'est la rareté qui fait le prix des choses.

In (III, 2), Colombine appears and tells the assembly she has the secret of "or potable," whose properties keep one vigorous in spite of old age. Anodin goes one better and claims to have discovered the elixir of the fountain of youth. Colombine, who has announced

[10] "J'ay ruïne ma famille de fond en comble pour vous aider: J'ay vendu deux terres et quatre maisons, j'ay engagé celle cy qui appartient à ma fille: Je me suis défait de mes rentes: j'ay emprunté sur gages: j'ay fait des Contrats usuraires, des Lettres de Changes, et plus d'un millier d'autres billets. J'ay commis des Stellionats, fabriqué plusieurs faussetez, et je me suis servi de ce titre specieux et apparent de la Pierre Philosophale, pour duper le tiers et le quart." If his wife had not died, he wonders if she would ever have consented "que j'eusse engagé ses habits avec les miens, que j'eusse vendu ses Bijoux, ses Pierreries, nôtre vaisselle d'argent, et tout enfin ce que je possedois au monde pour vous fournir de l'argent."

her age as 125, samples it and then claims she feels an itch. Upon scratching her beard, her grey hair falls off and she appears rejuvenated. Pascariel claims to be able to change "jettons de cuivre" into golden "écus," and apparently does so before the assembly. However, it develops later it is only a trick, for the sack has two compartments. He also sticks a silver plate into the furnace upon which he has put a mysterious powder and the silver seems to change to gold. As a matter of fact, the silver leaf has only burned off and the alloy, consisting of "de la Rosette mêlée avec du zinc et de la litarge d'or," remains. Just as a certain Chevalier de la Rosecroix enters who claims he has come in through a key hole and can transmute iron into gold, the assembly is thrown into consternation by the arrival of the police. The various members break up the furnace and escape. The love intrigue of the play then saves the situation. Octave promises Cinthio financial aid and police protection if he will grant him the hand of his daughter. So Cinthio and the Docteur can now continue their experiments.

Lotteries

Perhaps the most popular of the many get-rich-quick schemes of the period was the lottery. It was not a new institution in France, although it enjoyed unprecedented and widespread popularity during the latter half of the seventeenth century. As early as the fifteenth century there is evidence that the Duke of Burgundy exploited the lottery, taking a third of the net proceeds for himself, and that he conducted no less than thirteen such lotteries at Bruges from 1465 to 1474, while that city was under his sway.[1] In May 1539 the privilege to conduct a lottery had been given by Francis I to a certain Jean Laurent in consideration of the payment of two thousand livres tournois annually. The pretext was to "amortir la fureur du jeu" but in reality it was to obtain a share in the profits for the Royal Treasury. In the seventeenth century, Louis XIV, the Queen-Mother and the Duke of Anjou were among those who conducted private lotteries during the winter of 1658. The King made the price of his tickets five pistoles each, the smallest "lot" two pistoles each and the large "lot" one hundred pistoles.[2] A

[1] L. Gilliodts van Severen, *La Flandre*, III, 14.

[2] Sauval, *Histoire et Recherches des Antiquités de la Ville de Paris*, III, 75.

State Lottery had been organized in 1660 in connection with the marriage of Louis XIV, and thereafter such schemes were recognized as valuable aids to brace the resources of the French Treasury. However, it continued under the management of private individuals of all degrees of rascality until 1776, when a governmental decree abolished all private lotteries and substituted the "Loterie Royale de France." This in turn was abolished in 1836 by another decree.[3]

It would seem that the main use seventeenth century dramatists made of the lottery was to add reality or "vraisemblance" to a play. Since the public was deeply interested in the financial operations of the lottery and hence thoroughly cognizant with them, the addition of a lottery to the plot or the centering of a plot around a lottery tended to give the play an air of contemporary reality. Its use was a step in the transition from the comedy of intrigue and the comedy of character to that of manners.

The extent of the lottery craze can be judged from I, 9, of de Visé's *Les Intrigues de la Lotterie*:

> Et de quoi, je te prie,
> Pourrois-je te parler qui fût plus de saison?
> On en trouve aujourd'hui dedans chaque maison;
> On en parle à la Cour, on en parle à la Ville;
> L'ignorant en raisonne, aussi bien que l'habile;
> On entend retenir ce mot de tous costez,
> Dans tous les lieux publics, dans les Sociétez.

The enthusiasm for lotteries has reached all classes. It seems particularly popular with servants, who hope for large "lots." The description of this passion is amplified in I, 4, of Montfleury's *Le Gentilhomme de Beauce*:

> Il est vrai que jamais rage ne fut plus grande:
> Oui, je croi qu'en effet le monde devient fou,
> On se bat pour donner jusques au dernier sou;
> Je vois des gens très-courts d'argent, et de ressource
> Qui viennent en fureur prostituer leur bourse,
> Et s'empressent si fort, qu'ils semblent en effet
> Apporter à serrer un larcin qu'ils ont fait.
> J'en sais qui ne sauroient, outre toutes ces peines,
> Payer un numéro sans jeûner trois semaines,
> Qui depuis le matin dînant d'un peu d'espoir,
> Leur argent à la main, attendant jusqu'au soir:

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[3] G. Armynot du Chatelet, *Les Jeux et les Loteries Autorisés en France*, p. 91.

Pour pouvoir emporter, sans se lasser d'attendre,
Un morceau de papier griffonné, qu'ils vont prendre
Chez des gens plus fins qu'eux, qu'ils croïent assez sots
Pour les gratifier bonnement des gros lots:
A-t-on jamais parlé d'une telle folie?

The technique of operating a lottery is unfolded in several plays during this period. De Visé's *Les Intrigues de la Lotterie* is made up of a very slender plot, plus various incidents which occur in connection with the lotteries. For the lotteries are employed "boëtes" containing white (unlucky) and black (lucky) tickets. The prizes are many and varied (II, 1), ranging from money and silverware to books, hams, pastry, or even a parrot which a servant finally wins after having spent a year's wages on tickets.

There was evidently a great deal of fraud and trickery in connection with these lotteries. In I, 13, allusion is made to the crowd in the street who are complaining that only white tickets have been put in the boxes. In I, 2, a man arrives with a "crocheteur" to help him carry off a prize, "un grand miroir doré," which he claims to have won. He is shown up as a forger, however, for the simple reason that "Madame n'a pas mis un Billet noir." Act I, Scene 9, consists almost entirely of "lottery gossip." One man has bought several tickets in a box called "Amphitrion." One by one the tickets turn out to be white until finally only one remains, which might well be sold for the price of the box. When sold, the ticket turns out to be black and good for a prize of four hundred pistoles. A man won a golden vase in a lottery and promptly sold it. Two days later he won the same vase back in another lottery, which he sold again, and subsequently won a third time. Another case was that of a lady who priced a mirror at one hundred louis but felt she could not afford it. A little later she won the exact mirror with a twenty franc ticket. An old servant won six thousand francs on a two louis ticket and the shock was so great she died from it. Another woman won a husband by first winning a dowry from a lottery.

The chances of winning seem to be about one in two thousand (I, 9) and some people had such bad luck continually that they ended by committing suicide. Astrologers and "devineresses" were consulted and their advice used regarding tickets (II, 9).[4]

[4] Guidebooks were even written in this connection. C. L. Ewen, in his book *Lotteries and Sweepstakes*, p. 390, lists a book by Jean Le Clerc trans-

Of particular interest in Montfleury's *Le Gentilhomme de Beauce* is the "Avis aux Trésoriers des Foux" (II, 5). This is expert advice in verse as to the proper conducting of a lottery. The first point made is that at least one third of the funds should remain in the house. The second is that the lottery should not be run off for at least three months after the money has been collected and the interest earned thereon at the rate of twenty five per cent (au denier quatre), if possible. If the public becomes impatient, firmness in dealing with it should be used. The successful operator will have no scruples, for "comme il est des foux pour faire des folies: Il n'est des gens sensés que pour en profiter." One third of the black tickets should be given to conspirators, who for a small consideration will return the prizes. The lots should then be distributed with sagacity, as for example, one to the maître d'hôtel for paying the expenses of the tables for three months, another to the one who voices the complaint that he has bought tickets for four years and received nothing, and others to servants as wages. They should even be used to pay the tailor, baker and merchant by arranging the matter beforetimes and then putting in two or three good tickets. The concluding advice regards the prizes to be offered. They should consist of almost anything, furniture, pictures, old knick-knacks, etc. What is worth five or six hundred francs at the most should be designated as being worth three times that sum.

Montfleury has depicted the lottery in a more organized and unified way than de Visé.

The most amusing of all plays of the period concerning lotteries is without a doubt Bordelon's *La Loterie de Scapin*, a three act play in prose appearing at the end of his *Molière Comédien aux Champs Elisées*. The lottery is operated by M. LeSec and his clever, unscrupulous valet. The lots consist for the most part, according to M. LeSec himself (I, 1), of "quantité de choses qui ne me servent de rien, et dont j'aurois tres peu d'argent, si je les vendois." The one exception is the "gros lot," which consists of his daughter [5] and twenty thousand écus. The tickets sell at three

lated into English by Gillyflower and published at London in 1699, entitled: "Reflections upon what the world commonly call[s] Good Luck and Ill-Luck, with regard to lotteries."

[5] The idea of having a daughter's hand and a certain sum of money as a prize had been used before in St. Glas' *Les Bouts-rimés* (1682). In this

louis d'or a piece. Scapin, the valet, has kept two books with identical numbers and has sold them all, giving M. LeSec only one book. In this way he has muleted M. LeSec out of half of the returns of the lottery.

Clitandre loves M. LeSec's daughter Angélique and hopes, of course, to win the "gros lot," with Angélique and the 20,000 écus as the prize. Scapin handles the lottery in a manner so as to win the "gros lot" himself. Then he dickers with Clitandre, arranging to keep the money, give him Angélique, and obtain Lisette, whom he loves, for himself.

Caillet's *La Loterie* centers around a lottery, which Carnéade and his wife have set up. Carnéade's brother-in-law, Ariston, is loud in protest against this "filouterie" (I, 2):

> Ne m'avouerez-vous pas franchement entre nous
> Que ce jeu tient beaucoup de celui des filoux
> Et que celui qui tient et l'argent et les gages,
> Sans aucun contredit, a tous les avantages.
> Qu'il est un moyen sûr pour vendre argent compté
> Une chose dix fois plus qu'elle n'a couté:
> Et qu'enfin ce metier qu'on nomme Loterie,
> Est à parler sans fard, pure filouterie.

Carnéade retaliates and tells of the variety of expense, i. e. paper, ink, boxes, pens, etc., involved in a lottery plus a certain amount of profit for the operator. He goes on further:

> Quoi! vous croyez, Monsieur, que le soin et la peine
> Qu'il faut à tout moment qu'une belle main prenne
> De rouler des billets, et d'exposer aux yeux
> Tout ce qu'on a de riche et de plus curieux
> Ne soit rien à compter et devienne inutile.
> Il faudroit en son art être bien mal habile
> Et ne savoir pas vivre au siecle d'aujourd'huy
> Où regne l'interét où l'on fait tout pour luy
> Où rien n'est à donner, mais où tout est à vendre.

But he fails to convince Ariston. Pratolin, a servant, has put his wages for five years in this lottery. Philidor, his master's wealthy rival, has discarded his tickets in disgust. Pratolin, in case, however, a lottery was not involved, but a contest for the best sonnet in rimes previously announced. Du Rimet's daughter and 10,000 écus was the prize announced for the best rime, which closely parallels the "gros lot" used by Bordelon.

going through them, discovers a black one, and finds he has won a watch, a diamond and two hundred louis d'or. But Ariston has complained to the police (II, 12) and they arrive to seize everything.

Dancourt's *La Loterie* may have had a definite Parisian [6] background. The play deals with a lottery conducted by Sbrigani,[7] a former smuggler from Naples. The lottery differs from the usual one in that all the tickets are black and all bear prizes. These prizes are, for the most part, trinkets of little value, such as hankerchiefs (valuable, according to Lisette (I, 5), for those who lose, to dry their eyes with), toothpicks, a bottle of water from Cordouë, etc. The "gros lots" do not really form a part of the lottery. They represent clandestine ways for a lover to present a lady of his choice with a gift without any undue suspicion being attached to it. A Counsellor gives the Comtesse de Quimpercorentin (I, 20) a diamond cross worth two hundred pistoles. A Tax Collector gives a Chinese coffer filled with Indian silks to an official's wife. The tickets sell at two louis for a box containing eight tickets.

Sbrigani (I, 4) speaks of the facility of finding dupes for a lottery in Paris:

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[6] According to the Prères Parfaict (*Histoire du Théâtre François*, Vol. 14, p. 67), an Italian by the name of Fagnani obtained permission to conduct a lottery at the price of one écu per ticket. Fagnani promised a prize for every ticket. The Parisian public bought furiously, as Fagnani thought they would. The prizes then turned out to be very insignificant articles, such as Dancourt mentions in this play. The play itself was very successful at the time, and the Frères Parfaict maintain the spectators enjoyed the representation of an episode of which they had paid the expenses.

According to Dr. H. C. Lancaster (*A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, Part IV, p. 799), it is quite possible that the play may have given rise to the anecdote, for the subject was already familiar to dramatists of the period as shown by the plays previously discussed. Maupoint had given the details of the Fagnani affair some fifteen years before, and the account of the Frères Parfaict shows them greatly embellished with details not cited by Maupoint in discussing Dancourt's play.

In any case the Fagnani incident was at the most a very rudimentary skeleton upon which Dancourt built up his characterizations and the plot itself.

[7] "Sbrigani" is phonetically similar to "Fagnani," the swindler previously mentioned. The name had been used by Molière in his *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* for the character of an adventurer from Naples.

A ce que je puis voir les étrangers ne sont pas trop dupes, et il n'y a pas de païs au monde où une loterie rendît comme la mienne si bien qu'à Paris.

In three of the plays, the lottery was used as an accessory to the plot. In de Visé's *Les Intrigues de la Lotterie*, the only real purpose the lottery serves is to advance the intrigue of a very slender plot by furnishing a place where the hero and heroine may meet. The play, on the whole, however, is interesting and entertaining because of the various incidents which occur in connection with the lotteries.

Montfleury's *Le Gentilhomme de Beauce*, which appeared in the same year, makes a somewhat similar use of a lottery in connection with the intrigue of the plot. Here the heroine, Climène, whom her mother has affianced to M. de Courteville from Beauce, makes up a lottery in the hope that it will attract people to the house and help her get in touch with her lover, Léandre.

Another example of the lottery used as an accessory to the plot is found in the last year of the reign of Louis XIV. It is DuFresny's *La Coquette de Village*. Here a fake lottery list is introduced to the effect that a farmer named Lucas has won the "gros lot" of 100,000 francs. The object is to get him into the expansive mood into which the news of his winnings will put him, so that he will willingly cede Girard his property. The latter needs it in obtaining the hand of Lisette.

The lottery furnished a great deal of material for comic effect. Satire upon a human failing as universal as the desire to acquire wealth by a minimum of effort was bound to succeed. If a spectator did not recognize himself, he recognized his neighbor. The lottery furnished moreover an occasion for a great deal of good comedy in our twentieth century meaning of the word. For example, the names of the boxes in de Visé's *Les Intrigues de la Lotterie* all bear suggestive or amusing titles (I, 1; III, 5, 6) such as: Cresus, Mahomet, Lorgne-Lune, Argent-Mignon, Argent Perdu, Le Marquis Né Coëffé, etc.

The prizes in Bordelon's *La Loterie de Scapin* are tricky and humorous, and include such items as:

1) La chaise percée et le bassin dont se servait Cleopatre aprés avoir avallé une perle de tres grand prix qu'elle avoit fait dissoudre dans de vinaigre (II, 1).

2) Les deux pendans que Gargantua pendit aux oreilles de sa grande jument. (II, 1)

3) Une chopine du laict de la vache īo. (II, 1)

4) Une poule qui pond tous les jours un œuf, et autant que cela de sel (II, 1). Lisette remarks upon hearing this that: "La Gabelle fera un procez à celui qui aura cette poule."

5) Une Statuë de marbre qui tient un livre, dont elle tourne un feüillet toutes les fois qu'elle entend l'horloge sonner (I, 3). (Since the statue is deaf, it is impossible for it to turn a leaf.)

6) Une clochette qui sonne toute seulle. (Mme Dure-aux-Clercs wins this and thinks she has a wonderful bell which will ring without human touch. In reality it is one of several bells, which when sounded alone will ring "toute seulle.") (I, 10)

7) Un poisson qui a quatorze pieds entre teste et queuë (I, 11). (This turns out to be an "écrevisse" with fourteen feet.)

8) Plusieurs charges qui montent à plus de deux cens mille livres. (This turns out to be a ruined house weighing two hundred thousand pounds.) (III, 21)

The language of the lotteries penetrated the popular speech of the period. Thus in Boursault's *Les Mots à la Mode* we find Monsieur du Rus (sc. 8), in speaking of the improverished state of the nobility, say:

> Et que de vieux Barons pour le leur trouvent blanque [8]
> Quand le gibier s'envole, ou que leur fusil manque?

It also came to play a role in the figures of speech used in conversation. For example in *Le Banqueroutier* (Scène des Ambassadeurs) a remark is made about women:

> Mais aprenez qu'il en est des femmes ainsi que des billets de lotterie, de mille à peine en trouve-t-on un bon.

Finally plays concerning lotteries tended in certain instances to point an accusing finger at the practice. This tendency grew stronger at the turn of the century, reflecting the more hectic financial condition of the country generally. In his play, de Visé merely sketches the operations of a lottery in a very light vein through a series of disconnected and unorganized scenes. There is no attempt made to moralize or preach against them. Although Montfleury does not deliberately preach against them in *Le Gentilhomme de Beauce*, he succeeds in portraying the consciousness of

[8] In the seventeenth century lottery the tickets were white or black, the black being the lucky color. Hence "trouver blanque" would mean "draw a white ticket" and by extension of meaning "receive nothing," the meaning in this passage.

a social evil. Dancourt's *La Loterie*, although essentially a comedy of manners, gives out a warning to the Parisian public to beware of the lottery craze. Its denunciation stresses in particular the lottery conducted by a Neapolitan which forms the nucleus of the play. However, by extension, the condemnation can be interpreted to apply to all lotteries. It is the only play dealing with lotteries that could be called a " pièce à thèse " to any extent. That thesis is perhaps best expressed in Lisette's speech in the last scene of the play:

> Ils ne sont pas malheureux si elles réüssissent. Profitez de l'example, Messieurs, et si jamais quelque Napolitain est asez hardi pour faire une Loterie, que les Parisiens ne soient pas assez foux pour y mettre.

An unpublished play *Le Gros Lot de Marseille* had twenty performances between September 23, 1700 and January 4, 1701. This play probably dealt with lotteries. However, no copy of this play is in existence, and at this time one-act plays were seldom published unless their authors were well known.[9]

Tax Collectors

From the comedy of the period it is fairly easy to reconstruct the tax collector, his business practices and social position under Louis XIV. He appears with more and more frequency on the stage as the seventeenth century progresses and becomes the most important character in comedy with the opening of the eighteenth century just before the period of the Law System. His main role, of course, was to give a semblance of contemporary reality to comedy.

The rise and ruin of the tax collector, his aspirations to the nobility once his wealth is amassed, and various details in connection with his life, are all reflected in comedy. This reflection greatly enlarges the field of manners depicted by writers of comedy.

In discussing this particular manifestation of the role of money, the plays dealing with the tax collector as the central theme will be discussed first, in the order of their importance, followed by references to other plays which throw light on his character,

[9] H. C. Lancaster, *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, Part IV, p. 862.

operations and milieu. Finally, the tax collector as a source of satire and parody will be studied, and also the moralistic implications involved in presenting such a character on the stage.

Le Sage's *Turcaret*, appearing in 1709, is by far the most direct and strongest condemnation of the partisan depicted up to that time, but Le Sage does not give us much opportunity to see Turcaret's ability. His subject is the ruin of a partisan, not how one came to make a fortune.

There is every evidence that the play was not at first well received.[1]

To quote the *Critique de la Comédie de Turcaret* (I, 1): "Le public aime à rire aux dépens de ceux qui le font pleurer." This statement finds strong support in the historical and economic background of the time. In the year preceding its performance, the government owed seven hundred million francs and had only twenty million in the treasury.[2] Louis XIV was facing bankruptcy. It was only staved off by thirty million brought by the merchants of St. Malo from the South Seas, half of which was poured into the Royal Treasury. The tax collectors also turned in some forty million. In consideration for such favors the King was forced to confer honors upon them. The populace, however, realized the situation, and detested the partisan in spite of the appearance of royal favor.

Turcaret represents the upper stratum of the partisan caste. This is shown in (I, 5):

> Il est vrai que ma prose a son mérite; elle est signée et approuvée par quatre fermiers-généraux.

To impress this further on the Baroness he tells her (I, 5) about blackballing a certain "pied-plat" and "homme de rien" who

[1] According to Joannidès (*La Comédie Française de 1680 à 1920*, p. 65), it was played only seven times in 1709, and not resumed until 1730, in which year it was played fifteen times. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it became extremely popular, and the total performances 1709-1918 were 445. The Frères Parfaict explain the poor reception in 1709 by alluding to the excessive cold of that year and also the murmurs of a great many people who saw too strong a resemblance in the portraits. Claretie (*Essai sur LeSage Romancier*, p. 40) asserts the tax collectors did everything in their power to stop the performance, but it was finally played.

[2] Hilda Norman, *Swindlers and Rogues in French Drama*, p. 16.

aspires to become a member of the club he belongs to. He is decidedly convinced of his own genius and superiority (II, 4):

Hors moi et deux ou trois autres, il n'y a parmi nous que des génies assez communs.

His rise parallels that of other tax collectors who had appeared on the stage before him. He began his career as a lackey, married a woman of low social position whom he now tries to disown by passing himself off in society as a widower. He treats his sister just as miserably and she is forced to earn her living as a "revendeuse de toilette."

Turcaret on the one side is violent,[3] extremely self-confident, and utterly without scruple. He is absolutely without mercy and to him kindness and goodness are nothing but a sign of weakness and incapacitate a man for the business world. M. Rafle (III, 8) informs him one of his clients has been robbed of fifteen thousand francs because of his apparent good faith. M. Rafle concludes his remarks about the whole affair by saying "Dans le fonds, il est trop bon." Turcaret's reaction is prompt and vituperative:

Trop bon! trop bon! Eh! pourquoi diable s'est-il donc mis dans les affaires? Trop bon! Trop bon!

On the other side, Turcaret is a silly parvenu with libertine inclinations. He loves every woman but his own.

Turcaret's actions never lose the flavor of his profession. There is something mathematical even about his love poems (I, 4):

Recevez ce billet, charmante Philis,
Et soyez assuré que mon âme
Conserva toujours une éternelle flâme,
Comme il est certain que trois et trois font six.

He prides himself on his taste in objets d'art,[4] and his knowledge of music.[5] In this latter respect he is like M. de la Richardiere, a tax collector appearing in Grandval's *Le Quartier d'Hyver*. This tax collector was very fond of music, and used to court women with

[3] In a fit of anger (II, 5), he breaks the Baroness' porcelains and mirror.

[4] (III, 4): Je viens, Madame, de vous acheter pour dix mille francs de glaces, de porcelaines et de bureaux. Ils sont d'un goût exquis; je les ai choisis moi-même.

[5] In IV, 5, it develops he subscribes to the opera. To him "Une belle voix soutenue d'une trompette, cela jette dans une douce rêverie."

songs. Although extremely timid, de la Richardiere boasted of his presence at a sham battle as if it had been a real campaign. Other tax collectors, once the privations of amassing their great fortunes was passed, grew very fond of fine food. Such was the case of M. Bredouille, who had appeared in 1708 in Regnard's *La Critique du Légataire Universel.* M. Bredouille, who, as the name implies, was addicted to stammering, was also a gourmet.

The first partisan to appear on the stage during the reign of Louis XIV is a character from Chappuzeau's *Le Riche Mécontent, ou le Noble Imaginaire.* This play was also known as *Le Partisan Duppé.* His name is Raymond, and although the son of a village judge, he has acquired so much money that, to quote his own words, (II, 4) : " Pour plus de six Marquis mes biens sont suffisans." This " riche mécontent " strives to marry Aminte, the daughter of Géronte, a nobleman who has no wealth. She, however, loves a man of her own class, Lysandre. In the opening scene the latter describes the meteoric rise of the tax collector in the following lines (I, 1) :

> Vne nuit les enfante, et comme d'vn plein saut
> Du plus bas de la rouë on les voit au plus haut:
> Barons, Comtes, Marquis, deuiennent leurs esclaues,
> Et Maistre des tresors ils morguent les plus braues.
> Mais ce n'est pas d'vn air ny noble, ny galant,
> Et de nous imiter ils n'ont pas le talent.

It is from Raymond himself in the opening scene of the second act that we learn of some of the duties, problems and aspects of the life of a tax collector:

> Il faut répondre à tout, il faut se rendre esclaue
> Tantost d'vn Receueur, tantost d'vn Rat de caue,
> Auoir l'oreille au guet à tout ce qui se dit,
> Auancer ces deniers, conseruer son credit,
> Receuoir vne enchere, examiner vn conte,
> Prendre garde surtout que nul ne vous affronte,
> Que liure[s] et papiers soient en ordre parfait,
> Qu'vn Commis soit fidelle, et ce n'est iamais fait.

The portrait of the tax collector as presented in the character of Raymond is not a very sympathetic one. Although a successful business man, Raymond is both foolish and credulous. He is easily tricked by a clever servant. This does not particularly add vraisemblance to the play as the reader would be led to expect a certain amount of astuteness in a man who had been able to rise, mostly

by his wits, from a position in the lower brackets of French provincial society to one of great wealth. It, however, must have satisfied the public, whose hostility to financiers as a class the authors of comedy were ever ready to interpret, and it no doubt contributed much to the success of the play. But within the play, on the other hand, we are constantly made to feel that in general the position of the tax collector was not an unhappy one. Géronte expresses this philosophy when he says (I, 4):

> Ses pareils aujourd'huy sont les seuls bien heureux,
> Le Noble, le Bourgeois, l'Artisan, tout est gueux.

One of the best characterizations of the tax collector is to be found in Robbe's *La Rapinière ou l'Interessé*. M. La Rapinière is the "Fermier Général des Droits de la République de Gênes." He is a combination of hard-hearted miser and relentless and successful tax collector. He is from Normandy, that province renowned for the business acumen of its inhabitants, but he has been in Italy for twenty years, ever since he had been forced to flee from France (I, 1). In these twenty years he has been able to get together an estate which pays him twenty thousand écus income. His harshness and power may be judged from the following (I, 1):

> Le tître fastueux de Fermier Général
> Le rend de jour en jour mille fois plus brutal:
> Il ne veut voir personne, et son abord farouche
> Glace les plus hardis, et leur ferme la bouche.
> Il donne en certain jours, par un faste inoüy,
> Comme un homme d'Etat, audience chez luy.
> Là, d'un grave maintien, et d'un regard sauvage,
> Il reçoit des Commis les respects et l'hommage:
> Il y traitte ces gens, comme autant de captifs.
> Tous ses mots sont autant d'Arrêts définitifs.
> Les présens sont chez luy les patrons et les guides,
> Et l'on n'ose venir luy parler, les mains vuides.

Like his predecessor Harpagon, the miser of *L'Avare,* he is susceptible to female charm. In order to woo the girl he is interested in, he uses the authority of his position to confiscate feminine apparel and trinkets, which he then presents to her.

An unusual feature of this play is that it portrays, in the person of M. LeBlanc, a "sous-fermier," the first and only unsuccessful tax collector to be presented in the comedy of the period. He had contracted to pay 20,000 écus a quarter for his license. He has

found, however, that the yearly receipts are not more than 60,000 écus. In addition he has to pay office expense, interest on money, gifts to proper officials, etc. When he appeals to his superior, La Rapinière, for an adjustment and mercy, he gets none, for the latter replies laconically (I, 5):

Vous avez creu prendre et vous vous trouvez pris.
Vous n'êtes pas le seul.

The play is particularly replete with details of the tax collecting profession. The salary of a clerk is given as eight hundred francs plus "le tour du bâton," which is subsequently described as a certain profit which is kept by not entering certain amounts in the receipt books. This amounted sometimes to three times the salary (I, 2). Of the eight hundred francs paid as salary, it was the custom of the employer to keep back one third for himself (II, 3). La Rapinière held strictly to this rule, and maintained he would apply it to his own relatives, even to his brother.

In I, 7, La Rapinière is advised by his clerk, LaRoche, that the daily receipts have been about two hundred francs. He is highly incensed and claims this "porte" usually took in about four hundred francs. LaRoche explains that of late only plaster and flour have been coming through this particular entry.

Another portrait of the seventeenth-century tax collector is to be found in Dancourt's *Le Retour des Officiers*. Here the protagonist is M. Rapineau, "Sous-fermier des Aides de l'Election de Saint Quentin." In I, 1, we learn much about his career. He began as a lackey to a "gros Maltoutier," then became "rat-de-cave" and gradually rose to his present position. He is heartless and without pity towards his brother and sister, and spends all his money on Mme Thomas, a provincial bourgeoise, and her daughter, whom he hopes to marry. The daughter utterly despises M. Rapineau, and prefers an army officer. The audience must have hugely enjoyed the scene (I, 5) when Toinette tells of hiding Rapineau's clothes while he was bathing, and leaving him to shiver in the river during the supper which was being given at his expense.

In this same play a reference is made to the "Ferme du Tabac." Mme Thomas (I, 6) speaks to Henriette regarding the latter's father:

Le vôtre avoit la Ferme du Tabac, il est mort riche.

In the Prologue of the *Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux* by Dancourt, we are introduced to M. Simon who, according to the Diable, is "un Crésus, un Financier riche d'un demi-million, quoi qu'il ne soit que Sous-Traitant." Simon tells of his own career in this same Prologue. He began as lackey in the house of a financier and by dint of bribes from the lovers of his master's wife amassed eight thousand francs in three years. This he put in the hands of an "agent de change" at fifteen and one-half percent interest. The practice of accepting bribes, however, was his downfall in this particular household for his master gave him instructions not to let another rich financier of whom he was jealous enter the house, but failed to give him a bribe. The financier was more generous with his money and so gained admittance. When the master found it out, Simon was out of a position. But fortune was still with him, for the second financier took him in as a "commis" in order to irritate the first master. From "commis" he followed the classical pattern, became an associate and finally even a financier's son-in-law. In response to the question by the Diable as to what he does with his money, Simon replies:

> Quel usage? Je m'en sers pour en gagner d'autre, je n'ai jamais dépensé un sol mal à propos pour mon plaisir. Je travaille jour et nuit à faire travailler mon argent, afin qu'il augmente: le Seigneur Pillardoc ne me prêchoit autre chose.

The Diable Boiteux then takes him sternly to task and cites examples of other financiers who are now enjoying their wealth. Marsouin has built a superb palace and lives like a satrap "dans le luxe et dans la molesse." Oronte, who is only a "nouveau financier," has bought the house of a Seigneur and added two wings to it and torn down twenty houses to provide a garden.

Simon's wife, believing him dead, enters upon a life of as great extravagance as her previous life had been of misery. When Simon returns and finds it all out, he is quite ready to take the advice of the Diable Boiteux and enjoy his accumulated wealth.

In Boursault's *Esope à la Cour*, M. Griffet comes to visit Esope (IV, 5), supposedly for "le bien public," but in reality to obtain a position as fermier. In reply to Esope's question: "Et quelle est la vertu d'un fermier?" M. Griffet replies:

> De l'argent
> Il ne fait point de cas des vertus inutiles,
> Des soins infructueux et des veilles stériles.

D'une voix unanime et d'un commun accord,
Les vertus d'un fermier sont dans son coffrefort;
Et son zèle est si grand pour des vertus si belles
Qu'il veut tous les jours acquérir de nouvelles.
La vertu toute nue a l'air trop indigent;
Et c'est n'en point avoir que n'avoir point d'argent.

His next speech discloses his utter lack of conscience and his opinion that a financier should never be preoccupied with such a thing if he is to succeed. As for himself, he explains rather paradoxically that his only ambition is to "vivre en honnête homme, avec le bien d'autrui."[6] He says he is well qualified, as he has property, credit and cash. He concludes by saying Esope will be well satisfied with the "tour du bâton." Esope has never heard of this, and asks for an explanation. M. Griffet goes on to explain that it is a certain "profit clandestin," and moreover:

C'est par tout l'univers ce qu'on entend le mieux.
Que l'on aille d'un grand implorer une grâce,
Sans le tour du bâton je doute qu'il la fasse;
Pour avoir un emploi de quelque financier,
C'est le tour du bâton qui marche le premier;
On ne veut rien prêter, quelque gage qu'on offre,
Si le tour du bâton ne fait ouvrir le coffre;
Il n'est point de coupable un peu riche et puissant,
Dont le tour du bâton ne fasse un innocent;
Point de femme qui joue, et s'en fasse une affaire,
Que le tour du bâton ne dispose à pis faire.

He continues to speak more specifically of the "tour du bâton." When the King is approached and an offer of a hundred millions is made for a *ferme,* this offer is made in a loud voice and firm tone. In a lower voice and a more gentle tone, another sum is added, and this is "le tour du bâton." M. Griffet concludes his remarks by saying:

Et voilà ce que c'est que le tour du bâton.
Son étymologie est sensible, palpable.

Monsieur Patin,[7] the financier of Dancourt's *L'Eté des Coquettes.*

[6] A remark reflected in the nineteenth century in Dumas Fils' *La Question d'Argent* (1857), II, 7, "Les affaires, c'est bien simple, c'est l'argent des autres."

[7] This is the second instance of Dancourt's use of "Patin" as the name of a tax collector, the first being in his *Chevalier à la Mode,* three years previously.

produces a tangible example of the practice referred to elsewhere in this study of making gifts to women under the pretense of paying gambling debts. The financier in this instance gives Angélique two hundred pistoles and a diamond worth one thousand écus. But to a financier the language of love is the only language he thoroughly knows, that is, the language of finance and legal documents (I, 3):

> Vous m'avez ruiné, madame, et je ne puis vous payer comptant que deux cents pistoles. Je vous envoie, pour nantissement des cents autres, un diamant que vous avez trouvé beau, et que je reprendrai pour mille écus toutes fois et quantes. Fait à Paris, en mon bureau, l'an de grâce 1690, et du bail courant le troisième. "César-Alexandre Patin."

In his *L'Avare Duppé*, Chappuzeau has but one reference to tax collectors. Here he alludes to the vast sums of money they dealt with. In Act II, Scene 1, the miser engages two "crocheteurs" to transport the gold and jewels he has acquired from a wealthy Portuguese at Rouen to Paris. His uneasiness brings forth the following from one of the "crocheteurs":

> Tredame! auez-vous peur que nous vous le mangions?
> I'auons porté souuent iusqu'à des millions,
> Chez les gros partizans on vous en peut répondre;
> Mais depuis quelque temps ils nous laissent morfondre.

Finally his fears get the better of him, and he decides not to use the "crocheteurs" after all.

LaForge in his *La Joueuse Duppée ou L'Intrigue des Académies* has a reference (I, 1) to the "maltoutiers."[8] The conversation is about gambling, and Lisete refers to the detested tax collectors:

> Les doubles maltoutiers, avec leur monopole
> Empeschent à present qu'on ne gagne une obole.
> N'enrageroit-on pas de voir que ces filous
> Ont voulu rehausser les cartes de deux sous?
> Je ne suis pas icy la seule qui murmure;
> Personne n'est exempt de leur maudite usure,
> Et je pense qu'un jour on les verra, les gueux,
> Enchérir sur les choux et tondre sur les œufs.
> S'ils étoient tous pendus que j'en aurois de joye!

Damis is a wealthy tax collector in St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps*. He is also a miser. No details are given in this play,

[8] "Mal" plus O. Fr. "Toute" (redevance). Cf. Bloch-von Wartburg.

however, as to how he got his wealth together. Like other misers before him in French comedy he sets out to marry a young girl, but his wishes are opposed by his profligate son and daughter. *Le Triomphe de l'Hiver* is a "divertissement" given by Damis of St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps*. Allusion is again made to the many presents tax collectors received (I, 1):

> Que de ragoût, que de Vin de Champagne, il faut pour remplir cette bedaine-là, que je me donne au Diable si le ventre de Mr. du Carnaval ne tiendroit plus de provisions de bouche qu'il n'y en a dans la cave d'un fermier général le lendemain même des étrennes.

Reference is also made (I, 1) to the belief that a celebration paid for by a tax collector and ordered and supervised by an "homme de qualité" could not help but succeed.

After amassing a fortune by years of hard work and careful planning, the tax collector often became somewhat of a profligate, although his general tendency was to get full value for all expenditures. In Champmeslé's *Je Vous Prends Sans Verd* (I, 6), the comment is made that financiers were to be counted on at lansquenet and that "Le Partisan commode est un bon dépensier." In this play Julie despises husbands, but maintains that both financiers and partisans make excellent friends.

In Dancourt's *Le Chevalier à la Mode*, Mme Patin is the widow of a wealthy tax collector from Normandy who has amassed a fortune of two million francs. The portion of this she has in investments brings her an income of forty thousand francs. The one ambition of her life is to marry a noble, and so acquire a title. Her brother-in-law, M. Serrefort, becomes alarmed at this display of luxury she is putting forth in an effort to impress prospective suitors. In II, 1, he expresses a worry about a possible tax:

> S'il faut malheureusement que celle-ci éclate à la Cour, nous ne pourrons jamais nous parer de quelque grosse taxe.

In Fatouville's *La Fille Savante* (Scène d'Angélique, de Tortillon et de Pierrot), Angélique, the "fille savante," is definitely against marriage in the first part of this play. To every class of suitor suggested, she has objections. When a tax collector is proposed, she makes the following comment:

> Que vous me connoissez mal, mon pere! jamais financier ne me sera de rien. Il y a trop de haut et trop de bas dans la vie de ces messieurs-là. Aujourd'huy le palais d'un prince ne suffit pas pour les loger. Trois mois

aprés on les trouve dans une conciergerie. Viennent-ils de prendre un million d'une main, sur le champ on leur fait rendre de l'autre. Tantôt opulens, souvent miserables, et toujours accablés de maledictions. Je ne sai pas comment leurs femmes l'entendent: mais pour moi, j'aurois peine à broder mes juppes des malheurs du public.

This same sentiment of the uncertainties that beset the path of the tax collector finds its echo a year later in LeNoble's *Esope*. In this play Esope has a series of interviews with various persons, among whom are Monsieur Grippon, a ruined tax collector. He has lost all his money, yet he attempts to get Esope (IV, 4) to go in business with him, since he has "l'accès près du Roi." Esope, of course, will have nothing to do with him. He sends him away wth the words: "Je ne veux point de biens suivis de tant de maux." In their conversation the traditional road one follows to become a tax collector is again indicated. According to Esope, the tax collector begins as a lackey, then becomes a "rat-de-cave," then "petit-traitant" or "soû-fermier," and finally tax collector, after having learned all the tricks of the profession.

Another reference to the dubious permanence of the fortune of the tax collector is expressed in Dancourt's *Le Tuteur*. Here Lisette proposes that a financier would be a good husband for Angélique. Lucas, a peasant, replies (I, 5):

Un financier? Elle serait bien lotie. Aujourd'hui, Madame, et demain rien peut-être.

Nor does the turn of the century show any change in this attitude, for a similar doubt occurs in LeSage's *Crispin, Rival de son Maître*, which appeared in 1707. Here (I, 15), Oronte has been saving 50,000 écus to buy the château of a certain financier "qui va bientôt disparoître."

The opening scene of Regnard's *Le Joueur* finds Hector waiting for his master to come in from a night's gambling. He bewails his position as valet to an inveterate gambler and wishes he were working for a tax collector instead (I, 1):

Il est, parbleu, grand jour. Déjà de leur ramage
Les coqs ont éveillé tout notre voisinage.
Que servir un joueur est un maudit métier!
Ne serai-je jamais laquais d'un sous-fermier?
Je ronflerais mon soûl la grasse matinée.
Et je m'eniverais le long de la journée:
Je ferais mon chemin; j'aurais un bon emploi;

Je serais dans la suite un conseiller du roi,
Rat-de-cave ou commis; et que sait-on? peut-être
Je deviendrais un jour aussi gras que mon maître.
J'aurais un bon carosse à ressorts bien pliants;
De ma rotondité j'emplirais le dedans:
Il n'est que ce métier pour brusquer la fortune;
Et tel change de meuble et d'habit chaque lune,
Qui, Jasmin autrefois, d'un drap du Sceau couvert,
Bornait sa garde-robe à son justaucorps vert.

More light on the operation of a "Ferme" is thrown in Néel's *L'Illusion Grotesque ou le Feint Nécromancien.* In the opening scene, Philandre, a financier, gives directions to one of his clerks. As he is to be absent for a while, he cautions the clerk to be strict and without pity in his collections. He adds that in case of a suspicion, true or false, that there is any irregularity, a lawsuit is to be instigated at once. Nothing is to be feared from the judge in such an instance, since, as he is appointed through the power and extensive relations of the financier, he will have to judge the case in Philandre's favor.

Philandre then proceeds to demonstrate the superiority of the financier's profession over the other professions, in particular that of a lawyer. To Philandre, lawyers are "foibles esprits" who sell words and who make speeches without much sense to them. He ends his remarks by voicing the current opinion of the day, that to make a fortune as a lawyer is a long and perilous process, while the financier's rise is meteoric and his fortune more substantial.

In I, 2, we learn, however, of the insecurity of this fortune:

Ce sont des Champignons qui ne faisant que naître,
Dans l'espace d'un jour sont prests à disparoistre:
Leur cours précipité passe comme le vent,
S'ils éclatent, ils sont demain dans le neant,
On les appelle en Cour éponges ordinaires,
Qui sont de cent grands biens simples dépositaires,
Et dont au cas urgent, ou maxime d'Estat,
La dépouïlle s'appreste au gré du Potentat.

To become a partisan seems to have been the ambition of all who aspired to great wealth, or the equivalent of becoming a millionaire of the twentieth century. In Dancourt's *Le Galant Jardinier,* Lucas, a peasant, finds a paper which he thinks (I, 5) is: "queuque bon papier de conséquence, queuque contrat de construction, vois-tu,

queuque lettre de change." He becomes greatly excited, and confides to his wife:

> Si j'ai une fois de l'argent, crac, je me boute dans les affaires, je me fais Partisan, tu seras Partisanne; j'acheterons queuque Charge de Noblesse, et pis, et pis, on oublira ce que j'avons été; et je ne nous en souviendrons morgué peut-être pas nous-mêmes.

Mathurine, his wife, becomes equally excited and says: "Je deviendrons Nobles, Lucas? J'aurions carosse?" Lucas then replies significantly: "Pourquoi non? Je ne sommes pas les premiers Païsans qui auriont fait forteune."

If people of all ranks envied and aspired themselves to the great wealth of the tax collectors, they could remain more content with their present status by conjuring up to their minds the uneasy conscience of the partisan and the instability of his fortune. In Regnard's *Le Distrait* Valère (I, 1) asks Mme Grognac why she has rejected a prominent partisan as a suitor. Mme Grognac at first replies that he is too rich, a reply which greatly surprises Valère. She elaborates, however:

> Gagne-t-on en cinq ans un million sans crime?
> Je hais ces fort-vêtus qui, malgré tout leur bien,
> Sont un jour quelque chose, et le lendemain rien.

It is very rare indeed to find the financier in a benevolent role, yet such is the case in Dancourt's *La Loterie.* Sbrigany's dishonest practices have aroused the ire of the Parisian populace. At first he is able to stave them off with a spiked fence and guards, but it soon becomes evident that it will require something more. A financier calls on Sbrigany and recognizes Eraste, the customs clerk in love with Sbrigany's daughter. He arranges that Sbrigany put up 20,000 écus which Eraste will win in the lottery and marry the daughter. The financier then takes it upon himself to quiet those who are threatening the establishment. He orders Sbrigany to satisfy the most mutinous with money or sundry articles and assures everyone that "on prendra demain des mesures pour le reste."

The high position attained by the tax collector in society is shown by the following lines from LeSage's *Arlequin Thétis,* the Chorus (I, 9):

> Qu'il est doux d'être la Déesse
> D'un Grand Seigneur, ou d'un Traitant.

This is supported by a reference previously made in the *Scènes Françoises de l'Empereur dans la Lune* (Scène de la Fille de Chambre). Here Pierrot interviews Arlequin regarding a prospective servant's position:

Pierrot: Mais dis-moy, ma bonne, n'as-tu jamais servi des gens de qualité?
Arlequin: Est-il des gens de plus grande qualité que les partisans?

In Dancourt's *Le Vert Galant* (I, 9) the expression "logé et meublé comme un Financier" occurs to denote the height of physical comfort.

During the whole period the tax collector furnished many occasions for not only biting satire, but at times hilarious comedy.

In J. B. Rousseau's *Le Café*, LaFlèche (I, 5) vaunts his ability to disguise himself as a partisan:

Est-il question de représenter un partisan, par exemple; j'ai des secrets pour me noircir la barbe, épaissir ma taille, me rendre l'œil hagard et grossir mon ton de voix.

This physical conception of a tax collector would put him in the same class as the villain of the melodrama.

The satire in the "Scène des Enfers" in *La Descente de Mezzetin aux Enfers* is much stronger. Here Pluton wants to put a tax on wood and coal in hell in order to help pay for the new building that is continually going on in order to provide for the great number of newcomers. Proserpine replies:

Ah fi, m'amour! Ne parlons point d'impôt: C'est quelque nouveau-venu de maltôtier qui vous a soufflé cet avis-là.

Later Charon tells of the passengers he has ferried over that day:

Charon: "Dudit jour, cinquante-sept mille deux cens dix-sept, tant fermiers, sous fermiers, que commis et rats de cave."
Pluton: "Il est vrai qu'il en est tombé ce matin une brouine qu'on ne se voyoit pas en enfer.."
Charon: "Pour les fermiers, tout franc, il n'y a plus moyen de les passer, ils sont si gros et si gras que ma barque enfonce."
Pluton: "Comment voulez-vous faire? Nous ne pouvons pas les refuser, c'est ici leur appanage."

La Cause des Femmes by Delosme de Monchesnay ridicules the

tendency of dedicating many pieces of literature to tax collectors[9] (Scène du Baron). Arlequin is very agitated over this:

> Fi! c'est qu'il n'y a plus de police dans la poësie: l'empire des lettres va de droit fil à l'hôpital. Il faut pourtant qu'un de ces quatre matins, je plante à toutes les entrées du Parnasse, cinq ou six mouchars du bel esprit, qui arrêtent impitoyablement tous ces panegyriques de contre-bande, qui mettent l'honneur des Muses à l'encan, et font passer Apollon pour le ménêtrier de la douanne.

The honesty of the tax collector is parodied in Boursault's *Comédie Sans Titre*. One of the numerous callers at the editorial offices of the *Mercure* is Monsieur Longuemain, a "Receveur des Gabelles." This particular official has stolen two hundred thousand francs from the taxes and his conscience is bothering him (II, 4):

> De deux cens mille francs j'ay fraudé la Gabelle:
> Et vous m'obligeriez aprés ce beau coup-là,
> De donner dans le monde un bon tour à cela.
> Quand on a, comme vous, une plume si bonne. . . .

He explains that it takes money to live "en honneste homme" and although honesty used to be a fine virtue, it is no longer. He becomes indignant when the editor calls him a plain thief, and retaliates that he is more honest than those who have become rich through fraudulent bankruptcy. He alludes to the great wealth of the "fermiers" and says that two hundred thousand francs is really nothing to them. The editor then starts to preach to him about the advantages of a free conscience. Then M. Longuemain

[9] Both *Les Plaintes du Palais ou La Chicane des Plaideurs*, Denis, 1679, and *Salmigundis Comique ou Les Aventures Amoureuses*, 1696, by the same author were dedicated to tax collectors, the former to M. de Fremont and the latter to "Durey de Poligny, Conseiller du Roy, Receveur General des Finances de la Franche-Comté." It was more common to dedicate plays to financiers and members of their families, particularly Fouquet and Colbert. Quinault's *Le Feint Alcibiade* (1658), Claude Boyer's *Clotilde* (1659), Gabriel Gilbert's *Arie et Pétus ou Les Amours de Néron* (1660) were all dedicated to Fouquet. Quinault's *La Mort de Cyrus* (1659) and Boisrobert's *Théodore, Reyne de Hongrie* (1659) were dedicated to Mme Fouquet. Quinault's *Stratonice* (1660) was dedicated to Jeanin de Castille, a cousin of Mme Fouquet. Scarron's *Le Marquis Ridicule ou La Comtesse Faite à la Haste* (1656) was dedicated to Abbé Fouquet, brother of the financier. Gabriel Gilbert's *Les Amours d'Ovide* (1663), Boyer's *Jeune Marius* (1667) and Bompart's *Alcimène* (1667) were all dedicated to Colbert.

suggests that perhaps he could return half of the sum and that the fermiers généraux, upon seeing this sign of honesty (?) would promote him. He suggests that publicity to this effect be given in the *Mercure* and offers one hundred louis for the service. Of course it is rejected and Longuemain leaves.

In Regnard's *Le Divorce*, the chief character is Sotinet, a sous-fermier. A great deal of satire is directed against the sous-fermiers as a class and Monsieur Sotinet as an individual in the divorce scene (III, 6). Braillardet, one of the lawyers, mentions the fact that Sotinet is an amateur of fine paintings. Cornichon replies: "Je le crois bien: il a porté les couleurs assez longtemps pour s'y connaître. . . ."[10] Braillardet then says: " Cela est faux, il n'a jamais porté que du gris chez un homme d'affaires, et cela s'appelle sous-fermier, et non pas laquais, maître Cornichon, et non pas laquais."

Other jibes taken against the sous-fermiers by Cornichon are:

> **Un sous-fermier jamais en prison!**
> **Un homme qui a été toute sa vie dans les aides ne boit que de l'eau!**

and finally:

> **Vous êtes sous-fermier, et vous pleurez![11]**

Efforts to dodge taxes add considerably to the humor of Robbe's *La Rapinière ou l'Interessé.* When ten or twelve bottles of wine were confiscated because of attempted tax evasion on the part of a fountain maker, the latter cut La Rapinière's water pipes in retaliation. Taxes were collected, not only in money (II, 3), but also in "chapons, poulets, œufs, fruits." La Rapinière highly approves the action of his clerk in seizing two pigs that had run ahead of the peasant owner at the customs gate, on the grounds that they had not paid the "droits du Pié-Fourché."[12] Servants are bribed in the inns to warn the tax collectors of smuggled property. Supplies of various sorts (III, 7) are seized and held, and doubtful duties imposed, which the owners pay after becoming impatient because of the delay. In V, 2, a rôtisseur, seeking to smuggle in his

[10] The "couleurs" here represent the traditional seventeenth century colored liveries worn by lackeys.

[11] Cf. LaBruyère, *Des Biens de Fortune*, I, 257: "Un bon financier ne pleure ni ses amis ni sa femme ni ses enfants."

[12] See *supra*, p. 11.

produce, poses as a nobleman who is coming back from a hunt with the game he has killed.

The low origin of the tax collector and his aspirations to the nobility, once his fortune was achieved, were constantly held up to ridicule. In Montauban's *Panurge*, the tax collector is named Carpalim.[13] He is suggested as a possible husband for Bonbec (III, 3):

> Plusieurs et bons partis se sont offerts pour elle,
> Mais de roture ils ont la tâche naturelle,
> Entre autres Carpalim, et jeune et financier
> Et dont le seul défaut est d'être roturier.

In *Le Négligent* (I, 17), DuFresny refers to the low origin of the tax collector:

> C'est un pauvre diable de Tailleur que les crédits ont ruiné. Il me demande de l'emploi, je lui en ferai donner par un partisan de mes intimes, qui est le filleul de ma nourrice.

In Chappuzeau's *Le Riche Mécontent ou le Noble Imaginaire*, Raymond, in spite of the fortune he has acquired as a tax collector, is still sensitive about his bourgeois origin. Lysandre, in an attempt to lower Raymond's self-esteem, reminds him (IV, 7) that "vostre mestier . . . a fort peu de respect." The passion of his later years is to ally himself with the nobility. Lisete very aptly phrases this in the second scene of the first act:

> Raymond quoy que plus fin a pourtant sa folie,
> D'vn desir ridicule il a l'ame remplie,
> Il veut passer pour noble.

To achieve this end he aspires to the hand of Géronte's daughter, who, being a miser, is interested solely in getting money into the family. Raymond is then easily fooled into paying one hundred thousand écus for a fake genealogy which purports to show him as a descendant of the Counts of Toulouse.

M. Harpin, "receveur de tailles" in Molière's *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*, is one of the suitors of this provincial countess. She despises him and only keeps him around because of her coquettish vanity. M. Harpin, however, is not a man to be trifled with. When he discovers the truth of her sentiments, he publicly denounces her (I, 21):

[13] Rabelais, Book II, 9. Carpalim is Pantagruel's lackey.

. . . et que je vienne vous assurer devant bonne compagnie que je romps commerce avec vous, et que Monsieur le receveur ne sera plus pour vous monsieur le donneur.

One of Cidalise's suitors in Baron's *La Coquette et la Fausse Prude* is M. Basset, a financier. Baron probably named him such to emphasize his "bas" origin.[14] He does not intend to keep this name much longer, however. Marthon, the maid, recommends him highly to her mistress (I, 4):

Allez, allez, madame, il sera bientôt noble. Le nom changé fait tout: au lieu de Basset, monsieur le marquis. Acheter une charge, répandre deux milliers de pistoles à prêter à propos; il trouvera des amis et des parents à la cour même. Son père l'a fait riche; il fera son père gentilhomme. La plume usurpe la noblesse aussi bien que l'épée.

In *La Chasse Ridicule* the Count is a wealthy tax collector who has recently purchased a title and property to go with it. Ergaste, the Count's servant, characterizes him as follows (I, 1):

Voilà les fruits de la fortune. Son génie estoit humble tant qu'il a couru apres elle de maltote en maltote. Il est devenu insolent de prosperitez en prosperitez. Un genealogiste a priz d'argent luy a tourné la cervelle de mensonge en mensonge. Il croit prouver la splendeur de sa race de depence en depence; et de folie en folie il montre la foiblesse de son esprit et la bassesse de sa naissance.

To poke fun at the partisan and his ridiculous aspirations became almost a literary 'topos' in the latter part of the seventeenth century. There are few of the important comedies of this period that do not have some sly allusion, some thinly disguised satire on his caste. The Théâtre Italien is particularly replete with such attempts at ridicule.

In Scene six of *Les Momies d'Egypte*, the remark is made:

En voyant une sultane d'opera trocquer des diamants bâtards contre de legitimes, j'ai deviné qu'elle avoit faits de furieuses exactions sur quelque gros bacha sous fermier.

In Act II, Scene five of *Arlequin Phaéton*, Damon, a financier, chides Céphise because she has kept him waiting. He says that he has to be at his office at eight o'clock and that she has made him lose his "droits de presence."[15] To Céphise this is a mere trifle,

[14] A "basset" actually is a "chien de chasse à poil ras, au nez souvent fendu et très bas sur les pattes."

[15] Money paid for attendance at a meeting.

and she tells him so, finishing her remarks with the observation that she thinks he is highly "impoli." Damon then says he may be that, but his money certainly is not, to which Céphise answers only: "Ah, que cela est grossier!"

The two strongest indictments against the tax collectors are, without a doubt, Robbe's *La Rapinière* and LeSage's *Turcaret*. Both were attacking a very powerful class, and both felt the necessity of prefacing their plays with a justification and explanation of the matter presented in an attempt to stave off and appease their ire.

Robbe boldly states that the purpose of Comedy is to correct faults by setting them up to ridicule and criticism in an objective manner, such as is possible in writing a comedy. He is well aware of the danger, particularly in this instance, where he is attacking a large and powerful class, and one whose power has ramifications in almost every quarter. He maintains that his characters are entirely fictitious, and if by any chance there should be found a close resemblance between any of the characters of *La Rapinière* and public officials of the day, such resemblance is purely accidental. In replying to criticism that had been made that his depicting of unscrupulous methods of tax collectors has gone beyond reality, he maintains that the scene of his play is in Genoa, Italy, and that there is no state in Europe where there is such a complicated system of taxes, nor where they are paid with more exactitude. He quotes Pierre Davity's book, *Description de l'Europe*, chapter on Genoa: "des moindres choses qui entrent dans Gênes, prises des Iardins et des Vignes, on en paye le droit au Prince et à la Seigneurie."

LeSage also felt this danger very keenly. He attempts to appease critics largely on the grounds that none of the honest members of the profession should take offense at the portrayal of a dishonest one. This is expressed more at length in his *Critique de la Comédie de Turcaret* (I, 1):

> Comme le Tartuffe que vous avez lu, offense les vrai dévots. Hé! pourquoi les gens d'affaires s'offenseroient-ils de voir sur la scène un sot, un fripon de leur Corps! Cela ne tombe point sur le général. Ils seroient donc plus délicats que les courtisans et les gens de robe, qui voient tous les jours avec plaisir représenter des Marquis fats et des juges ignorants et corruptibles.

Usurers and Usury

The seventeenth-century attitude towards usury was divided between that of the strict followers of the church doctrine which absolutely condemned it, and that of the liberals who saw in it a means of economic progress.[1] At the beginning of the century,[2] Saumaise upheld the loaning of money at interest in three treatises.[3] After having established that this contract is contrary to neither God nor nature, he went on to develop the theory that the economic welfare of a State depends in a large measure on the liberty of obtaining loans at interest, and that if through some prejudice this was not possible, necessity would cause the practice to appear under some odious disguise. A violent reaction occurred against these liberal doctrines.[4] Bossuet was one of the chief denouncers, and he proceeded to publish six propositions on usury. His arguments were the old and worn arguments of the Church Fathers of the Middle Ages, which were hardly applicable to the times. All of the clergy, however, do not appear to have upheld his opinions, particularly the Jesuits. In the New World they had loaned money at interest by turning canon law to their own advantage without compromising themselves too much, and the "mohatra"[5] contract mentioned by Pascal[6] was one of their most skilful inventions.

[1] In the 14th century French Kings had permitted merchants to borrow money at interest during the duration of the *foires*. During the 15th and 16th century this permission became a royal monopoly and later, from Henry IV to Louis XV, the rates of interest were fixed by royal *ordonnance*. Interest was not authorized as legitimate in France until 1789 when such authorization was incorporated into the Civil Code.

[2] Léon Coste, *Histoire des Doctrines Economiques Concernant la Légitimité de l'Intérêt*, p. 91.

[3] *De Usuris*, *De Foenore Trapezitico*, and *De Modo Usurarum*.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[5] "Mohatra" is a Spanish word in use also in Portugal where it is written "Mofatra." According to Littré it means a contract or usurious bargain by which a merchant sells at a high price on credit what he only buys back again at a low price, immediately but for cash. The word is of Arabic origin—muhâtara, cf. A. Steiger, *Contribución a la fonética hispano-arabi* (1932), p. 234.

[6] The 8th of the *Lettres Provinciales*. "Maximes corrompues des casuistes touchant les juges, les usuriers, les banqueroutiers, le contrat Mohatra, les restitutions et diverses extravagances des mêmes casuistes." Here Pascal ridicules the casuistry involved in such a contract.

But regardless of ecclesiastical controversies, usury flourished, as a study of the comedy clearly shows. The profligate sons of the impoverished nobility were usually the victims, and the financiers those who profited. Usury was in many instances a side-line to some other profession. Often, as the following pages will show, it was practiced by some of the leading financiers who attempted to keep the fact a secret by conducting the business under the name of a subordinate.

Interest was usually expressed "au denier." This represented a relationship between the sum loaned and the interest per one hundred francs in the same manner that we say five per cent or six per cent today. To compare the interest rates of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, we must divide one hundred by the indicated "denier." Thus "au denier 20" equals 100 divided by 20 or 5 per cent. Interest rates varied from "le denier vingt-cinq" to "le denier un," or even more.

As stated, this was the ordinary way of expressing interest rates in the business world of the time, and its use in the drama is widespread. However, in the prologue of Dancourt's *Le Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux*, M. Simon refers to giving his money to an Agent de Change at "quinze et demi pour-cent" who "trouvait encore autant de profit pour lui." This use of expressing the rate of interest as a percentage, however, is very rare.

Dramatists were chiefly concerned with usury in the decade 1690-1700. Molière's *L'Avare* appearing in 1668 was not immediately followed by plays dealing with usury. In fact, there are practically no references to it until about 1685. In 1690 three plays make use of it and about fifty percent of the comedies depicting aspects of usury under Louis XIV appear from 1690 to 1700.

It would appear that Colbert's regulations regarding usury had been fairly effective while he was alive. His death in 1683 was the signal for a disregard of his conservative principles, and the group which succeeded him in power cared more for attempts at military expansion than for financial stability. This lack of financial stability in time of war and the frequent necessity of borrowing money account for the public interest in usury during the decade 1690-1700, and no doubt also influenced the dramatists to make use of it in their plays.

On December 11, 1689, Mme de Sévigné[7] in a letter to her daughter protests regarding "le denier six."

> Je commence par m'écrier, ma chère enfant, sur le denier six: Je n'en avois pas entendu parler depuis l'emprunt que fait le fils de l'Avare dans la comédie de Molière.[8] Je crois que vous avez voulu dire six et quart, qui est un denier dont j'ai entendu parler en Provence, qui va, ce me semble, au denier seize; mais le denier six est si usuraire, que je ne crois pas qu'un notaire en voulût faire un contrat.

About three weeks later in another letter to her daughter, dated January 1, 1690,[9] she speaks of the "denier dix huit":

> Les intérêts du denier dix huit de Languedoc ne sont point excessifs.

In this chapter the usurers who lend money out at interest on greater or less security will be discussed; then will follow a discussion of a later development in the business of the usurer, that is "agiotage," or the converting of specie into paper at a profit.

The first mention of usury in the comedy of the period is in Molière's *L'Avare*.[10] Harpagon, of course, is the usurer. He knows all the tricks of the trade and can calculate interest with lightning rapidity. In I, 5, he reminds his son that the twenty pistoles of "perruques et rubans" he is wearing, if invested as capital, would bring eighteen francs six sous, eight deniers, if only invested "au denier douze." When Cléante (II, 1), Harpagon's son, wants to borrow fifteen thousand francs, he first deals with Maître Simon, who is merely one of Harpagon's under agents. The contract is replete with legal phraseology and trickery. For example, the "prêteur," in order not to have any scruples on his conscience, at first states that the money is to be loaned "au denier dix-huit." However, the next clause states, that as the "prêteur" does not have at hand the necessary sum, but must borrow it elsewhere (perfectly true, for Maître Simon must get it from Harpagon), and pay for it "au denier cinq," it is only reasonable that he should pay that interest too, making a total of more than twenty-five per

[7] *Lettres*, Vol. IX, p. 343.
[8] *L'Avare*, Act II, Scene 1.
[9] *Lettres*, Vol. IX, p. 380.
[10] Boisrobert's *La Belle Plaideuse* (1655) is an important source for Molière's *L'Avare*. The miser portrayed is Amidor, who like Harpagon, is a business man with a daughter of marriageable age and a spendthrift son. Amidor lends money at usurious rates.

cent, or as Cléante says: "C'est plus qu'au denier quatre." The contract continues to the effect that since the "prêteur" has only twelve thousand francs in cash, the borrower must accept a various assortment of articles for the remaining three thousand francs . . . "que le dit prêteur a mis, de bonne foi, au plus modique prix qu'il lui a été possible." These articles vary from a "peau d'un lézard de trois pieds et demi, remplie de foin: curiosité agréable pour pendre au plancher d'une chambre" to a "fourneau de brique, avec deux cornues et trois récipients, fort utiles à ceux qui sont curieux de distiller." The contract closes naïvely with the phrase: "Le tout ci-dessus mentionné valant loyalement plus de quatre mille cinq cents livres, et rabaissé à la valeur de mille écus, par la discrétion du prêteur." Without a doubt, the objects are second hand trash, practically without value, and Cléante is well aware of this. He cries out against the infamy of the money-lenders, but, as he must have the money, he agrees to the terms. The contract is not destined to be carried out, for in the following scene Maître Simon goes to report to Harpagon. Cléante is present, Harpagon discovers all, and is furious with his son.

In Montfleury's *Le Gentilhomme de Beauce*, the Beauceron becomes incensed at the money people are recklessly and foolishly spending on lottery tickets. He would put the money out at interest (I, 4):

> Moi? Je mettrois l'argent de tous ces foux en rente,
> Et je ferois donner au père, ou bien au fils,
> De vingt ans en vingt ans, autant qu'ils auroient mis.

This would be the equivalent of five per cent, simple interest.

In *Le Banqueroutier* (Scene du Prest), people crowd around Monsieur Persillet in an effort to invest their money with him. Little do they suspect that he is about to trick them all by a fraudulent bankruptcy. They are so eager to hand him their money that they offer it at the "denier vingt-cinq."

M. Minet in Perrault's *Les Fontanges* has twenty thousand écus and is greatly disturbed because he can find no place to invest it (I, 3). In ten or twelve years, he can use it to marry his daughter, but that would not solve his present problem. As regards government securities, he speaks as follows:

> Chez le Roy, on paye fort exactement tous les quartiers; cela va le mieux du monde, mais dans quarante ou cinquante ans d'icy, vous m'en direz les nouvelles.

M. Minet then thinks of "rentes sur particuliers" and hastily adds that, if one wants never to see his money again, create law suits and make enemies, "voilà le vray secret." The world is so deceitful. He cites a certain M. Folineau, to whom all would have entrusted their property, and who now has been accused of forging contracts. M. Minet's notary is very aptly called M. Goupinet. If anything is cheap, M. Minet will buy it. His son tricks him into buying some books for thirty louis by making him believe they are worth eight hundred francs. Nothing makes M. Minet feel better than the prospect of a good return on his money (I, 5):

Il étoit de la meilleure humeur du monde; car il estoit venu l'après-disnée un emprunteur au denier sept fort bon et fort solvable.

Among the books M. Minet buys are: "Histoire veritable d'un Monstre né a Paris, moitié femme et moitié fontange" and a "Discours sur les Anciens." M. Minet seems particularly interested in the latter. When Bardin explains that the book tries to prove the superiority of the Ancients over the Moderns, Minet replies (I, 7):

Qui en doute? C'estoient veritablement de grands hommes. J'ay ouy dire qu'ils mangeoient la moitié moins que nous et qu'ils faisoient valoir leur argent au denier quatre. Nous ne sommes aujourd'huy que des miserables en comparaison de ces grands personnages.

Perrault, the author, who was so strongly in favor of the "Modernes" in the famous "Querelle," must have taken great pleasure in thus slyly poking fun at the "Anciens."

In Fatouville's *La Fille Savante*, when Isabelle, disguised as an Army Captain, tries to get Arc-en-Ciel, a seventy year old merchant, to give her two hundred louis "pour achever mon équipage," she immediately adds significantly: "Je vois déja à ta mine usuriere, que tu aimeras mieux les prêter sur gages au denier trois." (Scène de l'Enrollement.)

Balivardeau, one of the marriage brokers in Caillet's *Les Mariages Inopinés*, complains of difficulty (II, 1) in borrowing money. He says nothing is loaned without security and usurers have no scruples at all in charging interest "au denier quatre." In this same play we learn some of the tricks of Harpagon, a miser. He lends money on jewels (V, 2)—a loan he is quite sure will never be repaid. On a necklace worth two thousand écus, he has loaned three hundred pistoles; on ear rings worth one thousand

louis, he has loaned six thousand francs. His wife had left forty thousand écus to be held in trust for her children when they came of age, to be accounted for at five per cent interest. Harpagon loans it out at twenty-five per cent, and pockets the twenty per cent profit.

Regnard has introduced a usurer, M. Mathieu, into *La Sérénade*. Physically, he is described as being exceedingly fat. His role, however, is relatively unimportant in the intrigue. There is another usurer in his *Le Retour Imprévu*, Monsieur André. The latter has loaned Clitandre three thousand five hundred francs, and has taken his note for six thousand, thus taking two thousand five hundred francs as interest. Merlin (I, 2) makes a chance remark to the effect that "usuriers ou notaires (c'est presque la même chose)" when he is talking about Clitandre's debts to various "quidams."

Mention of the "denier un," or one hundred per cent, is made in Regnard's *Le Joueur*. Valère is in desperate need of a thousand écus to gamble with. Hector, his valet, in joining with Valère to beg Géronte (Hector's father) for the money, promises to pay interest "au denier un." Another reference to the exhorbitant "denier un" is found in the *Moulin de Javelle* by Dancourt. Here an old aunt of M. Ganivet, who bequeathed him a large sum of money, had sometimes made loans at the "denier un" (I, 25).

According to Scene 14 of Raisin's *Merlin Gascon*, Anselme, a usurer, received even more than "le denier un." He has loaned an Abbé two hundred écus and, in two months, the interest is more than fifty écus! This would be receiving interest at the rate of one hundred and fifty per cent. We learn a good deal about his business in the course of the play. Anselme usually lends under another's name, follows up and threatens his debtors, and has agents in the provinces, specifically in Normandy. He complains of hard times, although it would appear that the contrary would be more truthful. The unsettled conditions resulting from the war have only added to his business. He is very shrewd where money is concerned and is not at all deceived by Merlin, who tries to borrow money on a fictitious estate in the provinces (I, 6):

Non je vous en repons. Si le portrait de vostre chasteau estoit sur vne tapisserie de quatre ou cinq mille francs, et que vos tablettes fussent garnies de bons diamans, je pourrois faire vostre affaire, mais cela n'estant pas . . .

He promises Finette (I, 4) a pot-de-vin [11] and is much amused at her feigned innocence.

Anselme: Je le croy. Mais comme toute peine merite salaire, je te promets que je ne presteray aucune somme vn peu considerable que je n'y menage vn petit pot de vin pour toy.

Finette: Pour qui me prenez-vous, Monsieur? Ai-je la mine d'aymer le vin?

Anselme: Quelle innocence!

He is outwitted in the end by his servants through his own cupidity, a fate common to most of the usurers in the comedy of the period.

In LeGrand's *L'Usurier Gentilhomme* we find a portrayal of M. Mananville, a usurer born in Charonne of a "magister de village." In 1681, when twenty years old, he came to Paris and entered the service of an homme d'affaires. After working for several usurers, he opened an office on his own account and earned more than 200,000 écus in three years. He then bought extensive properties, including a title for his son, who is now Baron de la Gruaudière. One of his practices depicted in the play is to lend money on property worth six times the loan and to sell this property on default. The plot is the old story of the desire of the usurer to marry his son to Henriette, whose nobility is not quite as recent as that of the Baron de la Gruaudière. This is foiled by Frontin, Henriette's lover's servant, who unearths the usurer's low birth, and then, posing as Henriette's brother, comes to demand a pot-de-vin of one hundred thousand francs and also that (I, 19):

Tous les officiers de mon régiment et moi serons logés et nourris chez vous à discretion tous les hivers, pour nous dédommager des pertes que nous avons faites avec vos confrères les usuriers, depuis trois ans.

This, of course, is too much, for M. Mananville is still a usurer at heart, regardless of his social ambitions for his son. The marriage is declared off, the "dédits" mutually forfeited, and Henriette marries her real love.

Tax collectors often supplemented their incomes from the *fermes* by usury. The procedure was usually to do this part of their business through an agent, in order to avoid the bad publicity connected with the practice. In LeSage's *Turcaret*, Turcaret's agent is a certain M. Rafle. Act III, Scene 7, is largely devoted to an

[11] A tip or bonus paid for help in culminating a business transaction.

interview between the two. In the course of this interview Turcaret accepts "au denier quatorze" five thousand francs which a locksmith has saved. But the first matter to be brought up is that of a loan made to an "enfant de famille" for three thousand francs and for which a note had been made for nine thousand. The borrower, a person of some influence, has become uneasy about the payment and has recourse to his uncle, who is now doing his best to ruin Turcaret. Tucaret's only comment is that he is not easily frightened.

Valentin of Dancourt's *Les Curieux de Compiègne* sells bad merchandise to the army on credit at a high price and then takes it back (I, 8) at a low one. If he loaned one hundred pistoles, he had to have a note for one thousand écus. It goes without saying he is most unpopular at the Camp, but he pretends for business reasons not to resent his bad treatment. The Chevalier de Fourbignac is one of the borrowers. He expresses his attitude towards the usurers (I, 2):

> . . . et je leur paie consciencieusement par avance l'intérêt de leur argent, parce que le principal est mal assuré.

Monieur Harpin is a usurer in Dancourt's *Les Enfants de Paris*. He is wealthy and, according to Mme Brichonne (I, 2), gets a high rate of interest on money loaned:

> Depuis un mois que j'ai l'honneur de la connoitre,
> Nous avons fait l'un et l'autre en commun
> Quinze ou vingt affaires, peut-être,
> Au denier quatre, au denier un.

She adds that in all these transactions, everything appears under her name, as "il ne veut point paroître dans ces vétilles-là." As Dr. H. C. Lancaster has pointed out,[12] there is a strong influence of Molière's *L'Avare*. The basic plots are identical. Harpin is, of course, Harpagon, although not as miserly. Mme Brichonne is Frosine, although less developed as a character. Harpagon's spendthrift son and young daughter are Clitandre and Angélique. The latter is in love with Valère, as in *L'Avare*, and Valère appears in disguise in part of the play, as in *L'Avare* also. The transactions between father and son are very similar. In *Les Enfants de Paris*

[12] H. C. Lancaster, *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, Part IV, p. 810.

Clitandre obtains from a usurer jewels worth eighteen thousand francs which Mme Brichonne secures by loaning Clitandre six thousand francs, less her commission. When Clitandre does not pay, and Harpin calls in the police, the discovery is made, as in *L'Avare*, that he is dealing with his own son.

The cast of characters of Dancourt's *Le Vert Galant* presents M. Tarif as an "agioteur." This term is explained in the course of the play (I, 5) when M. Tarif says:

> . . . mais pour ce soir je ne sçaurois profiter de l'occasion que vous m'offrez; j'ai des affaires très-importantes pour un mariage, dont je fournis la dot en especes pour du papier sur lequel il y moitié à gagner.

In this play the terms "usurier" and "agioteur" are used interchangeably. In I, 1, Lepine refers to Tarif first as "l'usurier" and a little later on as "l'agioteur."

The starkest of realism regarding the practice of "agiotage," as conducted by usurers, is depicted in Dancourt's *Les Agioteurs*. As Jules Le Maître has aptly phrased it,[13] this play presents an inside view of the machinery of finance, or "la cuisine des Turcarets" from which the author has obligingly lifted the roof for the gaze of all. The names of the cast strike the general note of roguery and dupery which prevails throughout the whole play. We are presented with Zacharie, a usurer, Trapolin, his Godson, an agioteur, his agent, Craquinet, another agioteur, Cangrène and his clerk Chicanenville. D'Argentac, a rogue, Durillon, a lawyer, La Baronne Va Partout, a gambler, and Mme Demalprofit also have roles.

The chief character is Trapolin, a peasant whom his Godfather, Zacharie, the usurer, had taken under his protection some five or six years before. His business is described as (I, 1): "il change le papier en de l'argent, et l'argent en papier, et il ne perd jamais là-dessus, il gagne toûjours. Oh! c'est un bon négoce." The establishment is really run by a trio: Zacharie-Trapolin-Craquinet. Zacharie haunts public places and sends clients to his Godson. The latter then conducts the actual business through Craquinet. But, as the public is led to believe that the two crooks are actually enemies, they escape suspicion. Craquinet and Tarpolin actually live in two different streets with one of the angles of each building

[13] Jules Le Maître, *La Comédie après Molière et le Théâtre de Dancourt*, p. 156.

"mitoyen," through which there is a secret opening. Through this they communicate with each other and even have supper together every evening to give a mutual accounting of their business. The door is hidden by a false closet.

The fluctuations in the market do not affect Trapolin and Company for they are strong enough financially virtually to control it. When paper is plentiful and gold rare, they arrange (I, 9) to lower the exchange rate eight percent. This is done by notifying their agents:

> Monsieur Vilain, ruë Trousse-vache, à la Dame Gigogne.
> Monsieur Saint Denis, ruë Saint Bonnet, à l'Image Saint Claude.
> Monsieur Laîné, ruë Julien-Rebec, à la Casaque retournée.
> Madame Bersabée, au Cheval qui sifle, ruë Geoffroi-Lânier.

Trapolin's important position in Parisian society may best be judged by a remark by Mme Demalprofit (III, 6) addressed to Trapolin himself, "Sçavez-vous que vous êtes plus connu dans Paris que tout ce qu'il y a de plus illustre." He prides himself on his honesty and actually makes some of his clients believe it. When Mme Demalprofit (III, 6) leaves, she expresses her great confidence in him and adds: "Vous avez de l'honneur et de la probité."

The actual practice of "agiotage" is explained in great detail. Trapolin is greatly annoyed at Craquinet (I, 8) when the latter loans thirteen thousand paper francs to be given back at the end of six months and the note made out for fifteen thousand. To him, this "caprice de scrupules," as Zacharie characterizes it, is ruinous. Some idea of the average run of the business may be gained (I, 7) when Zacharie says he alone has done "quarante mille francs de conversions" in four days. He adds that the profit is about one third. In I, 3, he arranges with Craquinet to loan twenty-two thousand francs in paper for three months in exchange for a note for twenty-five thousand in "espèces sonnantes." His master deal, however, is (II, 4) when he exchanges thirty thousand francs of paper for nine thousands francs in gold. Clitandre is the victim in this instance. Trapolin is exceedingly crafty in dealing with merchants on the verge of bankruptcy. Under the guise of philanthropy he makes loans for security such as silverware, and the best of their merchandise, which he is sure to possess entirely within a short time. This money is loaned under another name to avoid legal complication in keeping the securities.

The callers at the business office of Trapolin are many and varied. Urbine (II, 5) wants to borrow twelve thousand francs in paper for her lover to set up an establishment. She will reimburse him in three or four months "à la mort de sa tante." Trapolin agrees, but says the note must be made for fifteen thousand francs in gold. Trapolin disclaims any moral responsiblity by saying:

Ce n'est pas moi qui prête, je n'en ai point moi de papier; ce sont des Turcs, des usuriers, des fripons.

All he is doing is, according to his own words to Urbine a little later on, to "faire plaisir." He has no scruples about condemning his business associate Craquinet. He is "un Juif, un altéré . . . ce fripon-là."

The next visit (II, 8) is that of Cangrène, another agioteur. Extreme politeness marks this meeting of Trapolin, Durillon and Cangrène. It is a case of "mon cher ami," "votre serviteur" and "je vous baise bien les mains." Cangrène starts to tell his troubles. He has loaned six hundred paper francs to an intimate friend without interest. He has taken as security a certain contract for two thousand francs. At the end of the three months, the friend could not pay. Cangrène then accepts another note, this time for one thousand paper francs, rather than go through the law procedure to retain the security. But again the friend cannot pay. This time he takes the security, which he has estimated at eight hundred francs, the friend gives him two hundred francs cash to makes up the difference and the affair is finished. Thus in about six months Cangrène has made a profit of fourteen hundred francs on capital of six hundred. But there is one scruple that bothers him, and that is the matter of the income from the contract during the six months period. Durillon assures him "les meilleurs Jurisconsultes du métier" would uphold him in keeping it, so Cangrène rests assured!

His next caller is Dargentac and here we have a scene of swindler against swindler. He claims to be of noble birth, but that (II, 9) "le malheur du tems m'a pourtant réduit à me faire Intendant d'une maison, dont le bis-ayeul étoit Intendant de la mienne." He is now ruining his master, hoping thus to recover the family fortune. As steward, he has been charged to pay a creditor some forty thousand francs in gold. He has so bedeviled the creditor that in vexation the latter has agreed to accept half in paper and

half in gold, an evident profit for Dargentac, and Dargentac has come to Trapolin for the paper. Trapolin readily agrees to furnish it on an equal exchange. Dargentac of course protests that it is robbery. But Trapolin counters that so is Dargentac's little deal. Finally he gets the twenty thousand in paper for fifteen thousand in gold. But the deal ends badly for Trapolin. A little later on (III, 11) Dargentac arrives with a cab and a lackey with the money. Trapolin and his assistant start counting the money when Dargentac is called away. He ultimately absconds to Genoa with his master's money and Trapolin finds he has been duped, for the amount left by Dargentac is short.

Women are also represented among Trapolin's clients. Mme Demalprofit wants to borrow four thousand francs to pay a lace merchant and the Baronne de Va Partout wants money to gamble with.

Trapolin is duped again in the course of the play. Chicanenville calls (III, 19) and borrows one thousand francs. However, when he leaves, the money sacks are mixed and he carries off the two thousand francs obtained by Trapolin from Dargentac. As Chicanenville is from Normandy, Trapolin feels sure he will never get his money back. He fares a little better with Dandinet, the son of a Financier whose father has purchased a title of Marquis for him. Although his parents' wealth is stated at eight hundred thousand francs, they will advance nothing to Dandinet. He finally succeeds in borrowing twenty thousand francs to be paid in six months, the note being made out for twenty-two thousand francs. As security Durillon obligingly allows Dandinet to take out a mortgage on his house and convey it to Trapolin. Trapolin warns Durillon to make sure the "stellionat"[14] is in good form. After they have gone, Trapolin muses (III, 10):

> Ce ne sera pas la plus mauvaise piece de nôtre sac que Monsieur le Marquis Dandinet: il faudra que la famille païe, et de jeunes badauds comme celui-là sont merveilleux pour avancer en très-peu de temps un nouvel établissement.

Dancourt's *Les Agioteurs* is the most realistic money play of the period. The only touches which do not quite ring true are the scenes where Trapolin is duped. It is hard to believe that such misfortunes would have occurred so easily to a man of Trapolin's

[14] The illegal act of selling or mortgaging property not one's own.

financial wizardry. The incidents were undoubtedly inserted to make the play more palatable for the audience. A Trapolin triumphant in all his dealings would have been an irritation to the audience; a Trapolin duped at his own game is a comic character.

In the "Scène Dernière" of the *Scenes Françoises de l'Empereur dans la Lune*, the customs in the moon are expounded by Arlequin and commented on laconically by Colombine or Isabelle with the invariable remark that things are no different here. In response to a question regarding the usurers, Arlequin answers:

> Fy, au Diable, je ne souffre point de ces canailles-là. Ce sont des Pestes à qui on ne fait jamais de quartier. Mais dans mes grandes Villes, il y a d'honnêtes gens fort accommodez, qui prêtent sur de la vaiselle d'argent aux enfans de famille au denier quatre, quand ils ne trouvent point à placer leur argent au denier trois.

Upon which Arlequin is again assured by Isabelle; "C'est tout comme ici."

Miscellaneous Business Procedures and Aspects of the Role of Money

It is the purpose of this chapter to consider various seventeenth-century business procedures and methods, and other aspects of the role of money, which are found reflected in comedy, but not to the extent of justifying the devoting of a separate section to each particular one. Contracts were occasionally introduced into plays, and these will be considered first. Certain plays are "comédies de mœurs" dealing with a particular profession. Plays involving the atmosphere of a lawyer's office and a merchant's establishment will be discussed in this section. Bribes in official positions, forgery, arrest for debt and the pawnbroker's office—all minor representations of the role of money will then be considered. Finally the few allusions to the dowry system, divorce, and alimony will be discussed.

It was Colbert's belief that a thorough reformation and standardization of business practice was necessary for the improvement of commerce. This belief took tangible form in March, 1673, in the Code of Commerce, or as it was sometimes called the *Code Savary*, because of the work of Jacques Savary in collaboration with other experts in preparing it. This code laid down the rules for the

operation of the apprenticeship system of guilds, regulated the dealings of bankers and brokers, formulated methods of book-keeping and standardized commercial contracts.[1]

The theatre of Molière, therefore, reflects business practices in use before the promulgation of the *Code Savary*. However, as Molière is more interested in the presentation of character than "mœurs," he does not furnish many examples of the details of business procedure. *L'Avare*, although primarily a comedy of character, is an exception to this. His use of seventeenth-century methods of usury has been dealt with in the section devoted to it.

One of the first contracts to be mentioned is the marriage contract which the notary proposes to draw up between Arnolphe and Agnès in Molière's *L'Ecole des Femmes*. Arnolphe, of course, wants no dowry from Agnès, as he wishes her to be entirely dependent upon him. The notary informs him that the usual rule is for the husband to endow the wife with a third of the dowry she brings him, but he hastens to assure him that he can give more if he so chooses. Then he speaks of the "préciput"[2] which he explains is for them to decide upon between themselves.

In Molière's *Le Malade Imaginaire* we find Argan consulting with Monsieur de Bonnefoi on a manner to recompense Beline for her good services and attention to his illness as his second wife. According to Bonnefoi (I, 9): "Tout l'avantage qu'homme et femme conjoints par mariage se peuvent faire l'un à l'autre, c'est un don mutuel entre vifs: encore faut-il qu'il n'y ait enfants, soit des deux conjoints, ou de l'un d'eux, lors du décès du premier mourant."[3] Argan is very much disturbed at hearing this, but M. de Bonnefoi assures him there are ways of circumventing the law. He suggests that he bequeath money to a friend of Beline's to be given to her later on, to contract obligations from creditors who will substitute their names for that of Beline and who will turn

[1] C. W. Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism*, I, p. 360.

[2] In jurisprudence the "préciput" was the advantage that the marriage contract stipulated in favor of the survivor. The word was also used in the seventeenth century to designate the two francs a day awarded to the actors of the *Comédie Française* who remained at Paris while their comrades were acting at Fontainebleau.

[3] To quote the note from the *Oeuvres de Molière avec des notes de tous les commentateurs*, Paris, 1860: "M. de Bonnefoi rapporte ici presque textuellement les articles 280 et 282 de l'ancienne Coutume de Paris."

over the money collected to Beline, or to turn over cash or notes payable to the bearer to Beline while he is still alive.

In Hauteroche's *Le Deuil*, Timante pretends his father Pirante is dead, puts on mourning and sets out to get money from Jaquemin, one of his father's tenants. Jaquemin is very much excited upon learning the news, because he has paid eight hundred écus on his rent and has no receipt. Timante knows this, and hastens to assure him that Pirante's ghost has appeared and told him all about it. Jaquemin also wants a new lease with the annual rental lowered one thousand francs. Finally they compromise on five hundred. Timante collects the remaining rental due, six thousand six hundred francs, plus the one hundred louis for the "pot-de-vin" and signs the following contract (I, 11):

J'ai soussigné confesse avoir reçu de Monsieur Jaquemin, la somme de six mille six cents livres, qui, jointes à deux mille quatre cent livres qu'il avoit payées à feu mon pere sans quittance, l'acquittent de l'année échue à Pâques dernier. Plus, j'ai reçu cent Louis d'or, pour le pot-de-vin du nouveau bail, que je m'oblige de lui passer devant les Notaires toutes fois et quantes, aux mêmes clauses et conditions de celui-ci, à la réserve du prix, qui ne sera à l'avenir que de huit mille cinq cents livres. Fait ce . . . mil six cent soixante et treize.

TIMANTE

The signing of marriage contracts by trickery was a favorite theme. It had already occurred in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, La Foire de Besons* and in other comedies, and it has a central position in Dancourt's *Le Notaire Obligeant, ou les Fonds Perdus*. Here Merlin and Lisette, two clever servants, trick Mme Gérante out of two thousand écus by forging a letter saying that Valère, whom she loves, is in prison and the money is needed to get him out. Later they forge another letter from a Marquise who has two hundred thousand francs and who wants to marry Valère. This makes Mme Gérante jealous and also willing to give all her money to Valère. The two servants then procure signatures on marriage contracts which unite Valère with Angélique, Mme Gérante's daughter, and Oronte with Mme Gérante. Lisette does not see anything particularly immoral in her trickery (I, 3):

Lisette: Non vraiment, et c'est proprement comme l'argent du jeu qui passe seulement d'une main dans une autre.

Merlin: Fort bien, et nous avons le profit des cartes, nous.

Dancourt's *La Femme d'Intrigues* has a reference to the high cost of a marriage contract. Here La Brie, disguised as Mme Thibaut's notary, says (II, 3):

. . . Madame, cela étoit bon autrefois; mais aujourd'hui pour épargner les frais d'un Contrat, la plûpart des gens se marient sous seing privé.

The "mœurs" of the notary's office are depicted in two plays. The first of these is Denis' *Les Plaintes du Palais ou la Chicane des Plaideurs*, a comedy of manners with a law office as a setting. Reference is made to the high costs of appealing to the courts for justice. Madame Tristancœur, who is somewhat similar to the Countess de Pimbesche of Racine's *Les Plaideurs*, complains that the costs are more than the earnings in a lawsuit (I, 2):

C'est assez!
Je gagne? Et les despens sont-ils pas compensez?
Les grands frais que j'ay faits ont excedé la chose.
N'est-ce pas, en effet, avoir perdu ma cause?

The second is Nolent de Fatouville's *La Matrone d'Ephèse, ou Arlequin Grapignan*, which is much more replete with details. It has an interesting scene entitled "Scène d'un Vieux Procureur Instruisant au jeune practicien qui veut acheter sa charge." The "vieux procureur," Coquinière, begins by saying that no one in the profession ever succeeded without a sergeant, a notary, and a record clerk. He advises him to steer clear of people of too strict morals, and to deal rather with people whom need and necessity make seek the society of others and who are above all susceptible to money. He says that, if Grapignan follows his instructions, in four years he will have ruined a hundred families and acquired ten houses in Paris for himself and a carriage for his wife. He adds that at forty he himself had earned two hundred thousand francs and that, if at that time the wives of "procureurs" would have dared to have carriages and wear gold braid, his wife certainly would have done so. In questioning Grapignan regarding his aptitude for the profession, Coquinière asks: "Aimez-vous l'argent avec âpreté?" "Vous sentez-vous d'humeur à tout faire pour en amasser?" Then when Grapignan answers in the affirmative:

Tant mieux. Vous voilà déja à demi procureur. Sachez donc que pour parvenir en fort peu de temps, il faut être dur et impitoyable, principalement à ceux qui ont de grands biens: il ne faut jamais donner les mains à aucun arbitrage, jamais ne consentir d'arrêt diffinitif; c'est la peste des

études. Au reste qu'on ne vous voye que rarement aux audiences. Attachez-vous aux procès par écrit, et multipliez si adroitement les incidens et la procedure, qu'une affaire blanchisse dans votre étude avant que d'être jugée.

He closes his advice by admonishing him to write a good deal, even "des impertinences, des suppositions, des faussetés; et quand on est au bout, il faut avoir recours aux invectives et aux injures."

In the "Scène de l'Etude" of this same play, Grapignan expresses his idea of becoming "marguillier" after he has made his fortune as a "procureur." This, he says, will be "un très-bon vernis sur la réputation d'un procureur."

The first few scenes of *Le Marchand Duppé* of the Théâtre Italien throw some light on the business practices of a merchant. Friquet, the merchant, is old and wealthy, has a jealous wife and is interested in a young woman, named Isabelle. His son and his clerks rob him, but hold him in check by the knowledge they have of his illicit love affair. Friquet does nothing regarding their peccadillos because he is afraid they will tell his wife regarding Isabelle. Friquet complains that the sale of his merchandise does not bring in half of what it costs him. The clerks sell for cash, pocket the money and say the merchandise was sold on credit. Friquet is not fooled, but their blackmail is effective, for he is afraid of his wife. Friquet's son has sold some velvet to a certain Princess. When his father asks if she paid him, he replies (I, 3):

Ne vous ai-je pas dit cent fois, mon pere, qu'il ne faut jamais porter des marchandises chez les gens de qualité? Quand ils tiennent un garçon, ils l'emboisent de leur caquet, et le remenent à la porte avec des reverences. Ma foi, vivent les financiers pour payer comptant.

In *Les Bains de la Porte St. Bernard,* Scaramouche is introduced, disguised as a "brocanteur." There follows a discussion of a practice known as "le troq," or exchange or barter system of doing business. According to Scaramouche, his reputation extends in all the "galleries, chambres, salles, salons, garderobes, cabinets, caves, greniers et cuisines." He trades in an assortment of "porcelaines, tableaux, medailles, marbres, bronzes, meubles, pommades, liqueurs, pantoufles . . . jambons, mortadelles et saucissons" (II, 5). In the course of the conversation, the doctor makes the remark that this method of exchange is very popular. Scaramouche assures him that it is, and cites examples:

Celui-ci troque sa livrée contre une commission; cet autre une commission contre une ferme. Ce fermier troque sa liberté contre une femme; et son argent n'est pas plutôt troqué contre des meubles, des perles et des bijoux, que les meubles et les bijoux de la femme se troquent contre des équipages d'officiers. Ce gentilhomme chicanneur troque son château contre des sacs à procès et le procureur troque son encre et son papier contre le château; enfin c'est un troq perpetuel.

The doctor inquires about a jewel for his daughter, emphasizing that he wants a bargain. Scaramouche wants to know if he has cash, that "chaussepied du hazard et le passe-partout des bons rencontres." He shows him a diamond pin:

Voyez-vous cette grosse agraffe de diamans? J'en ai tiré de bonnes nippes d'une grosse fermiere à qui je la vendis cher, sur la fin de l'automne, et je l'ai eu à très-bon marché d'un petit-maître à l'ouverture de la campagne.

Street vendors and hawkers make their appearance in Perrault's *L'Oublieux*, where an "oublieux" or "marchand d'oublie" enters and sings, offers his wares and talks of his business; also LeGrand's *Carnaval de Lyon*, where an "opérateur" or seller of patent medicines advertises his medicines. These vary from cures for venereal disease to prescriptions for upset stomachs. Another "opérateur," Barry, makes his appearance in a play by Dancourt entitled "L'Opérateur Barry" in the prologue. He is a typical seller of quack medicines.

Corruption in the police system was rampant. The jobs had to be paid for, and usually the incumbent augmented his income by accepting bribes. In Rosimond's *Les Qui Pro Quo, ou le Valet Etourdi*, a "commissaire" performs his duties until he is finally bribed (III, 15). He then makes an allusion to the cost of his position.

Nos charges cont cheres,
Il faut les regagner du mieux qu'on peut.

Dancourt's *La Foire de Besons* has a reference to forgery. L'Olive had forged M. Griffard's signature. The forgery was discovered and L'Olive had to carry in broad daylight a lighted torch through the streets of Paris.

Allusion is made in Denis' *Les Plaintes du Palais ou la Chicane des Plaideurs* to recruiting methods for the army. Machavide

invited Trotanville and others to have a drink at the "Entonnoir." Trotanville is immediately suspicious (II, 15):

> C'est de l'argent du Roy;
> Je ne suis pas si sot que de boire avec toy:
> Tu nous enrollerois sans y songer peut-estre.

Fournel[4] explains that recruiters often got their men drunk and then enticed them to sign service contracts. Often, however, it was not necessary to go so far. The mere fact of having drunk to the health of the King with "l'argent du roy" was considered the equivalent of enrollment in the army.

Recruiting practice appears again in *La Fille Savante* by Fatouville. Monsieur L'Arc-en-Ciel drinks to the health of the King and at seventy years of age becomes a member of the King's Army. He had previously accepted three louis from Isabelle, disguised as a captain, supposedly to buy a head dress. Later on this is used against him and the claim is made that he had accepted the King's money, and so was enrolled. His signature on the recruiting contract is secured by a trick. Arc-en-Ciel thinks he is merely writing his name and address to facilitate the delivery of the head dress. He offers a bribe of four hundred louis d'or to the soldiers who come to take him to the regiment, but it is refused. There is also evidence of the paying of money to release men from the service. In the "Scène de l'Enrollement," Jolicoeur's father brings thirty louis d'or to have his son released from the army. He is repulsed with the answer that, unless he raises the amount to fifty, there is nothing to be done. On the other hand, the wife of a "fripier" arrives and offers twenty pistoles to keep her husband in the army!

There are surprisingly few allusions to arrests for debt. J. B. Rousseau's *Le Flatteur* does, however, furnish evidence of the practice. Francisque's master owes two thousand écus and Francisque informs him (V, 2):

> Patience: en voici d'une autre bien plus belle!
> En vertu d'un papier, il cherche les moyens
> De se faire payer sur vous et sur vos biens;
> Et comme vous n'avez d'autre effet saisissable

---

[4] Victor Fournel, *Petites Comédies Rares et Curieuses du XVII^e Siècle*, II, 163.

Que votre individu, ce corsaire implacable
A résolu, dit-on, avec ses conjurés,
De vous faire saisir partout où vous serez.

La Folle Enchère by Dancourt concerns an auction with Eraste as the property on the auction block and the bidding reflecting what two women will put up as a dowry. The two women are a marquise in disguise and Eraste's mother. The bidding ranges from sixty thousand écus, the initial bid made by the Marquise, and the closing and successful bid of two hundred and ten thousand francs by Eraste's mother. The auctioneer is Merlin, and his closing of the auction (I, 22) sounds almost modern:

A deux cent dix mille livres! Une fois, deux fois. A deux cent dix mille livres. Ecrivez, Monsieur de Bonnefoy, adjugé à la plus offrante.

Monsieur Topase, a pawnbroker, is introduced in *La Désolation des Joueuses* by Dancourt. It has been his practice to take money for jewels from gamblers at about one third of their value. He is very much upset about the prohibition of lansquenet and he even goes so far as to say (I, 4): "voilà le commerce ruiné en France." The high opinion he has of his profession is disclosed when he says, "Paris verra ce qu'il perd, en nous perdant surtout."

Seventeenth-century French marriages were largely arranged according to the dowry system. The comedies of the period mention dowries which varied more or less with the wealth and position of the families involved. It seems to have been a very firmly intrenched social institution in the seventeenth century. The only protest against the system voiced in the comedy of the reign of Louis XIV is to be found in *Philipin Sentinelle,* by Sévigny. M. Thomas had offered twenty thousand écus as a dowry for his daughter Isabelle. The prospective father-in-law has refused the contract, saying the dowry is not enough. M. Thomas then wanted to add one thousand écus more, but his wife held him baek for fear of a refusal. It is Thoynon, the maid (I, 4), who voices the condemnation of the dowry system:

Ie ne sçaurois penser sans entrer en courroux,
Qu'une fille ait besoin d'argent pour un époux,
Maudit soit l'inventeur de cét injuste usage.
Si l'on me veut iamais pour femme en mariage,
Il n'est aucune loy qui puisse prevaloir,
Et l'on financera si l'on me veut avoir.

She continues to philosophize on what would happen if the dowry system were abolished (I, 4):

> On ne verroit plus tant de feux passionez,
> Et les fourbes auroient un vilain pied de nez:
> Car combien en voit-on sous de tendres mysteres,
> Songer à leur fortune, et faire leurs affaires?
> Chaque jour à Paris on commet de ces tours,
> Et l'on y voit tres peu de sinceres amours.

To bear out her point she tells of a girl whose parents put her in a convent to avoid using money for her dowry. The daughter, however, managed to escape from the convent into the arms of her lover, who from all appearance possessed great wealth. To save her honor, the parents then arranged the marriage, but, after the ceremony, the wealth of the bridegroom was found to be fictitious. The parents were furious, but the young wife was so much in love with her husband that money made no difference, and the marriage was far more successful than the average.

It was customary occasionally for a near relative, such as a sister, who never married, to donate her dowry to advance a marriage in the family. Sometimes, such a relative was entitled to the income, however, until her death.

In *Les Ménechmes* (I, 5) Démophon proposes to Araminte, a fifty year old spinster, that she donate her wealth to advance her niece's marriage.

> Vous feriez de vos biens donation entière
> Vous gardant l'usufruit jusque à votre mort.

In *Les Dames Vengées* (I, 5) a mother persuades her daughter to give her property to her brother in order that he may have "de quoi paroître à l'exemple des ses Ayeux." After signing the contract and when the marriage is concluded, the daughter is to enter a convent for the rest of her days.

In *Le Distrait* (IV, 4) Le Chevalier urges his sister Clarice to enter a convent and so divert her money to him. She refuses, however:

> Je prends comme je dois tes conseils là-dessous;
> Mais l'avis ne vaut pas cinquante mille écus.

Divorce,[5] since it was condemned by the Church, was certainly

[5] Divorce in seventeenth century drama was never presented except when disguised as annulment. Its presentation, however, was permitted in historical plays. There is record of a lost *Divorce* by Champmeslé.

not a very common practice in the seventeenth century and there are very few comedies which treat of it. Regnard's *Le Divorce* is one of these few. The suit is "Zorobabel de Roqueventrousse vs. Mathurin-Blaise Sotinet, sous fermier." The action is brought by the party of the first part, Sotinet's wife, who seeks to obtain a separation "de corps et de biens," restitution of her dowry (which she never brought to her husband) of twenty thousand écus and alimony. Charges of cruelty and drunkenness were brought against Sotinet and the latter brought counter charges of gambling, infidelity and extravagance against his wife. The wife wins the suit and is awarded the divorce, restitution of the dowry and annual alimony of three thousand francs. Sotinet is to be sent for the rest of his life "aux Petites-Maisons, ou à St. Lazare."

CHAPTER III

The Value of Money During the Reign of Louis XIV

System of Coinage

The standard system of coinage in France during the years 1661 to 1715 was that of deniers, sous (12 deniers) and livres or francs (20 sous). In addition to these standard coins, the écu, the pistole and the louis were also in current circulation.

The value of the écu, the louis, and the pistole in terms of francs is disclosed directly in various passages appearing in different plays of the period.

According to the drama, the écu was apparently worth three francs in 1671. In Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (1671), II, 11, the question is asked: "Sait-il bien ce que c'est que cinq cents écus?", and the answer is: "Oui, Monsieur, il sait que c'est mille cinq cents livres." Actually the value of the écu had been set at three francs in 1654, and was not changed until 1689, when it was worth three francs six sous. This increase is reflected in Dancourt's *La Folle Enchère*, which appeared in 1690. Here, in I, 22, the expression occurs: "A deux cents six mille six cents livres à cause de la passe[1] des écus." This sum of two hundred thousand francs plus two thousand écus makes the value of the two thousand écus to be six thousand six hundred francs, or 3.3 francs (three francs six sous) for each écu.

Again in Dancourt's *Les Bourgeoises à la Mode* (1692), IV, 9, the remark is made: "Oui, vraiment, mille écus, valant trois mille deux cents cinquante livres." This would put the value of the écu at this time at three francs five sous to the écu. This seems to be a fairly accurate value when it is borne in mind that the offical value of the écu in 1689, as stated above, was three francs six sous.

According to the drama, the pistole seems to have varied in value between ten and twelve francs. In Desmares' *Merlin Dragon* (1686), I, 7, the statement occurs "trente pistoles, ce sont

[1] Littré: "La petite somme qui ramène à leur valeur primitive les pièces de monnaie que le gouvernement a reduites." Littré then gives this exact quotation from *La Folle Enchère*.

trois cent cinquante cinq livres." This would set the value of the pistole at that time at 11 5/6 francs. In Fatouville's *Le Marchand Duppé* (1688), II, 7, we learn that "cinq cens pistoles valent toujours cinq mille francs." This would put the value of the pistole at ten francs. Actually, the value of the pistole had been set at ten francs in 1652 and increased to eleven francs twelve sous in 1689. In 1691 its use in the French coinage system was discontinued. Thus Fatouville's evaluation is exact, but that of Desmares[2] is not, although it approximates the evaluation of 1689.

Many more references occur concerning the louis, which would seem to have been in more frequent circulation. In Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670), III, 4, M. Jourdain says: "Ces trois articles font quatre cent soixante louis qui valent cinq mille soixante livres." This would fix the value of the louis at eleven francs. In Champmeslé's *Le Parisien* (1682), III, 14, sixty-six double louis are purported to be worth one thousand four hundred and fifty-two francs; a double louis was therefore worth twenty-two francs. In the same scene, one hundred louis are said to be worth eleven hundred francs, so that a standard louis was worth eleven francs. In St. Yon's *Les Mœurs du Temps* (1685), III, 4, mention is made of a lettre de change for four hundred louis at fourteen francs a piece. In Dancourt's *La Folle Enchère* (1690), I, 15, "des louis neufs" are said to be worth twelve francs ten sous. In Dancourt's *La Loterie* (1697), I, 28, a louis d'or is said to be worth fourteen francs. In DuFresny's *La Joueuse* (1706), IV, 14, one hundred louis and one thousand francs are used interchangeably. This would set the value of the louis at ten francs.

Actually, the value of the louis had been set at ten francs in 1654, increased to ten francs fifteen sous in 1666,[3] and increased again to eleven francs in 1670.[4] In the ensuing years of the reign of Louis XIV and the beginning of the reign of Louis XV, it

[2] Unfortunately the original edition of *Merlin Dragon* has not been available for examination. This evaluation of the pistole may have been inserted in the subsequent editions. Again Merlin, clever valet that he is, may have known methods of obtaining more for gold than the price set by the currency regulations.

[3] Pierre Clément, *Lettres, Instructions et Mémoires de Colbert*, VII, 424.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 426.

increased in value to as high as thirty francs. Molière's evaluation of the louis is thus exact. The course of the louis was so erratic from 1670 on that it is difficult to pass judgment upon the other authors quoted.

Miscellaneous Coins Mentioned

In Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes,* we find Bélise saying (V, 3):

Veuillez, au lieu d'écus, de livres, et de francs,
Nous exprimer la dot en mines et talents,
Et dater par les mots d'ides et de calendes.

Although not dating back as far as Bélise would wish, many coins not in general use in the seventeenth century are mentioned in the various plays.

Reference frequently occurs to the "double." In Molière's *L'Avare* (III, 6), there is the expression "il n'y a point de monsieur Maître Jacques, pour un double," and again in his *Ecole des Femmes* (V, 4): "Non, il vous rendra tout jusques au dernier double."

Another coin mentioned is the "teston." In Molière's *L'Etourdi,* Mascarille says (III, 5):

De quelle vision sa cervelle est frappée!
Vous êtes de l'humeur de ces amis d'épée
Que l'on trouve toujours plus prompts à degaîner
Qu'à tirer un teston, s'il fallait le donner.

Again in LaForge's *La Joueuse Dupée* (I, 2), Turlupin says:

Et les adroits joüeurs, empochant le teston,
Sur votre argent défunt firent un beau fredon.

There are frequent allusions to the "ducat" and "piastre." The following reference from *La Rapinière* (II, 6) is typical:

La Roche: Ce Ducat est-il bon?

La Fleur: Ouy Monsieur.

La Roche: Serviteur.

Jasmin: Et cette piastre au moins, pese-t'elle?

There is but one reference to a coin called an "invalide." This is in *Les Deux Arlequins* (II, 5):

Tiens, prens cet invalide, à ma santé va boire.

There is also a reference to a "jacobus" in scene six of the inner play "*Zig-Zag*" of Poisson's *Le Baron de la Crasse*: "Regardez tous ces jacobus."

In *Le Marchand Duppé* (I, 4) mention is made of a "maille": "Je n'en demande pas une maille." It occurs again in Boursault's *Les Mots à la Mode* (I, 12): "Pour estre convaincu de n'avoir pas la maille."

La Cause des Femmes (Scène du Baron) by Delosme de Monchesnay, has a speech by Arlequin in which he mentions a "liard": "il ne m'a jamais coûté un liard pour réussir auprés des femmes."

There is an occasional reference to the "obole," as, for example, in *Le Distrait* (I, 6):

> **Et ramassant écus, livres, deniers, oboles,**
> **Nous n'avons encor pu faire que deux pistoles.**

"Carolus" are mentioned several times. In *La Joueuse Dupée,* Turlupin says (I, 2): "Et vos gens cependant, avec vos carolus." Mention of the same coin is found in Dancourt's *Les Bourgeoises de Qualité,* together with an allusion to the "sous parisis":[5] (I, 2)

> **Oui, mais si, comme au temps passé, on vous donnoit trois sous parisis, ou deux carolus. . . .**

Boursault's *Comédie Sans Titre* (I, 1) has a reference to a "quadruple," which unfortunately, was not of the right weight:

> **Merlin: Un quadruple.**
> **Oronte: A Toy?**
> **Merlin: C'est la première fois;**
> **Encor suis-je trompé, car il n'est pas de poids.**
> **Je seray bien-heureux si j'en ay trois pistoles.**

Value of the Franc in Terms of Money of the Twentieth Century

To arrive at a fixed value for the franc of the seventeenth century in terms of the twentieth century currency is not an easy task.

According to Germain Martin in his book, *L'Histoire du Crédit*

[5] Sous Parisis as opposed to Sous Tournois, that is sous coined at Paris, as opposed to sous coined at Tours.

[6] Introduction, p. viii.

en France sous le Règne de Louis XIV,[6] certain authors [7] claim to have arrived at acceptable scientific conclusions by comparing the purchasing power of the franc in its relationship to the hectoliter of wheat. But there was a great variation in the price of wheat during the reign of Louis XIV from a normal year to a year of comparative famine. For example, in 1709, the price of wheat was six times higher than during an average year. It is thus important to arrive at an average price over a period of years. The official price range of the hectoliter of wheat in Paris expressed in silver grams from 1660 to 1712 was as follows:[8]

1660-1669	Hectoliter	of	wheat	is	worth	91	41	grams	silver
1670-1679	"	"	"	"	"	73	71	"	"
1680-1689	"	"	"	"	"	65	76	"	"
1690-1712	"	"	"	"	"	75	11	"	"

The average price, 1660 to 1712, of the hectoliter of wheat was therefore 76 grams 49 silver or about ten francs. In the few years preceding 1914, the hectoliter of wheat was worth from 20 to 24 francs. The conclusion thus would be, agreeing with the one already arrived at by M. Levasseur, that the purchasing power of the franc in the reign of Louis XIV was twice that of the franc in 1914.

M. D'Avenel, relying on tables of prices he has drawn up, proposes the following coefficients; 1651 to 1672, 2; 1676 to 1700, 2.33; 1700 to 1715, 2.75. Vuitry upholds the coefficient 3 for the period 1683 to 1715.

Germain Martin, confronted with these conflicting variations, takes recourse in a typical seventeenth century buget. This is the budget of the brother of Madame de Maintenon, who had an income of 12,000 francs a year. The household consisted of master, mistress and ten servants. The budget is made up as follows:

Food	6,000 francs
Clothes for Madame	1,000
Clothes for Monsieur, Theatre, and Sundry Expenses	3,000
Wages and Clothes of Servants	1,000
Rent	1,000

[7] Levasseur and Natalis de Wailly.

[8] Registre KK 1001 of the Archives Nationales de Paris.

Using the coefficient two it can readily be seen that with twenty-four thousand francs it would have been utterly impossible to take care of the expenses of a household with ten servants in 1914. The only item approaching the 1914 equivalent in any way would be 12,000 francs for food.

M. Martin's conclusion, therefore, is that the ratio of one to two can perhaps be applied to objects of current consumption, such as food. It would be acceptable for budgets of laborers, artisans, etc. who made their clothes at home and who lived in extremely modest dwellings. But the coefficient must be carried higher, to 3 or 3½, to apply to salaries, the general expenses of the upper bourgeoisie and the nobility, and especially to any item where labor is concerned. Using the coefficient 3½ and the franc in 1914 being worth about twenty cents, the value of the franc under the reign of Louis XIV, for the purpose of this study, is best taken at seventy cents in 1914.

The écu has been taken as three francs; the louis as eleven francs and the pistole as eleven francs. In general, this represents the evaluation of the dramatists. For example, in *La Matrone d'Ephèse,* Scène de l'Etude, Le Marquis says to Grapignan: "Voilà une piece de quatre pistoles. Prenez dix écus, et me rendez quatorze francs." This would represent a value of eleven francs for the pistole and three francs for the écu, the evaluations chosen for this study. Harpagon in *L'Avare* (I, 4) says: "Je vais gager qu'en perruques et rubans; il y a du moins vingt pistoles; et vingt pistoles rapportent par année dix-huit livres six sols huit deniers, à ne les placer qu'au denier douze." If the value of the pistole is taken at eleven francs in this instance, then the capital of twenty pistoles, or two hundred twenty francs would yield at the "denier douze," or 8½ per cent, 18.7 francs, or the approximate yield which Molière mentions.

In this respect, economists [9] seem to be generally in agreement that even the best index numbers applied to the purchasing power of money have numerous philosophical and mathematical defects. Also that price and wage movements, in terms of the original money of account, reflect the actual situation better than derivative quotations in fixed weights of gold or silver.

[9] Hamilton, E. J., *Use and Misuse of Price History,* p. 49.

M. Henri Hauser in his book [10] on price history in France from 1500 to 1800, published in 1936, writes as follows:

> Et quand on me demandera "M. de Choiseul, pour embellir Chanteloup, ou pour construire des hôtels autour de la comédie italienne, a dépensé tant de centaines de mille livres. Combien cela représenterait-il aujourd'hui?, je répondrai: "Je n'en sais rien." Et si l'on ajoute: "Mon grand-père, sous Louis-Philippe, dépensait tant pour ses voitures, donnait telle dot à sa fille. Etait-ce un homme riche?" Je dirai: "Allez le demander à l'auteur du Chat-qui-pelote, de César Birotteau, du Journal de deux jeunes mariées." Mieux que les statistiques il vous situera un riche bourgeois dans son milieu; il vous révélera mieux que tout calcul, le pouvoir d'achat relatif à son temps et sa classe, des rentes, du revenu des terres, des spéculations, heureuses ou ruineuses de son héros.
>
> Pour savoir ce que valaient cent mille livres aux beaux temps du Second Empire, interrogez Zola. Lorsque Noël du Fail, à la fin du règne de Henri III, compare le pouvoir d'achat de l'argent à ce qu'il était sous François Ier, le propos du conteur vaut pour nous tous les diagrammes. Les observateurs contemporains ont moins de chances que les statisticiens d'aujourd'hui de se tromper sur ce qui constituait, à telle date, la richesse, l'aisance, la gêne, la misère. Pierre de l'Estoile, en voyant défiler à travers les rues de Paris le cortège d'un conseiller au Parlement, chevaux, laquais, paniers de légumes et de fruits de la maison des champs, savait qu'il avait à faire à un très riche personnage. C'est là notre seul critérium à peu près sûr.
>
> Pouvoir d'achat? Problème insoluble, je dirai même impossible à poser historiquement, en termes numériques.

The prices for the seventeenth century as disclosed by a study of the drama of the period have therefore been listed in the appendix to this volume by categories so that comparisons may be made following M. Hauser's thought regarding the approach to literature for a more accurate appraisal of values in a given century. Thus to questions regarding seventeenth century values, the answer might be given: "Interrogez Dancourt, interrogez Regnard."

[10] Hauser, Henri, *Recherches et Documents sur l'Histoire des Prix en France de 1500 à 1800*, p. 82.

CHAPTER IV

Value[1] of Property and Scale of Living During the Reign of Louis XIV

Estates

The largest personal fortunes under the reign of Louis XIV were those of the tax collectors and financiers. And likewise, the greatest fortunes mentioned in the drama are those of the same class.

Some specific references supporting this are:

The fortune of Raymond, the tax collector in *Le Riche Mécontent* (I, 4) amounted to 2,000,000 francs or $1,400,000.

Mme Patin, widow of Patin, a tax collector, in *Le Chevalier à la Mode* (I, 1), possessed a similar fortune—2,000,000 francs or $1,400,000. Her income (I, 5) is given as 40,000 francs. This would represent only a return of two percent, but it is highly probable that some of this two million was invested in personal property, such as a house and jewelry, which did not produce an income.

The fortune of the tax collector in *Esope à la Cour* (IV, 5) amounted to 1,500,000 francs or $1,050,000.

The tax collector of *La Rapinière* (I, 1) enjoyed an income of 20,000 écus or $42,000. At six percent interest, this would represent the return on $700,000.

The fortune of a "sous-traitant" of *Le Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux* (Prologue), amounted to 500,000 francs, or $350,000.

The fortune of Bredouille, a tax collector in *La Critique du Legataire Universel* (I, 5) amounted to an income of 50,000 francs, or $35,000.00. At six percent interest, this would represent the return on a capital of $583,333.33.

The fortune of a financier in *Les Agioteurs* (III, 9) amounted to 800,000 francs, or $560,000.

[1] In all values quoted in this chapter, given in terms of the dollar, the value of the dollar is to be construed at its value in 1914.

The fortune of a banker in *La Rue St. Denis* (I, 20) amounted to 200,000 francs, or $140,000. M. Persillet of *Le Banqueroutier* (Scène de Colombine et Persillet) had a similar fortune before he attempted the fraudulent bankruptcy scheme. This represents the residue of a much greater fortune, for, according to Persillet: ". . . je suis ruiné par la dépense de ma fille et de ma femme, mon crédit est usé, les bourses sont fermées, je n'ai plus que deux cent mille francs dans mes coffres."

The fortune of the usurer of *L'Usurier Gentilhomme* (I, 2), amounted to 200,000 écus, or $420,000.

The majority of the nobles mentioned are in a more or less impoverished state, and are seeking to replenish their fortunes by marriage with the wealthy upper bourgeoisie. Hence the amounts of their fortunes are rarely mentioned. However, in *La Comtesse d'Orgueil* (II, 1) we do learn that a Marquis has a fortune of 600,000 francs, or $420,000. Another Marquis in *Le Marchand Duppé* (I, 6) is purported to have had an income of 100,000 francs, or $70,000. This is hardly to be taken seriously, however, as the Marquis is really Mezzetin, the merchant's son, in disguise, who is seeking to impress Colombine.

Avant la mort de mon pere je me retirai en Hollande, parce que je n'avois que cent mille francs à manger par an.

The Baron de Tourmentière in this same play (I, 6) is reputed to have an income of 60,000 francs, or $42,000 a year.

A baroness in *Les Agioteurs* has an income of 16,000 francs, or $11,200. (See Act I, Scene 13.)

There are a few references regarding the professions.

A physician in *La Comédie Sans Titre* (I, 2) has an income of 15,000 francs, or $10,500. M. Purgon, the physician of *Le Malade Imaginaire* (I, 5), has an income of 8,000 francs, or $5,600.

A lawyer in *Les Bains de la Porte St. Bernard* (Scène du Procureur) has a fortune of 300,000 francs, or $210,000.

An abbé in *Le Banqueroutier* (Scène de Persillet et Colombine) has an income of 30,000 francs a year, or $21,000. With this he is able to lead a very worldly existence: "Il voit tout ce qu'il y a de jolies femmes à Paris. Il joue gros jeu, son train est leste: il a une belle maison, des meubles magnifiques, et un cuisinier qui dame le pion au vôtre."

A wealthy dyer in *Le Vert Galant* (I, 3) has an estate of 200,000 francs, or $140,000.

A table of the various fortunes of the bourgeoisie mentioned will be found in the Appendix.

Real Estate

There are many references to landed property in the theatre under Louis XIV, but there are few references which show the value of such property.

In *Les Agioteurs* (III, 9) a house belonging to Durillon situated in the Paris suburbs is mentioned as being worth 45,000 francs, or $31,500.

Another house mentioned in *Le Parisien* (I, 8) is worth 20,000 francs, or $14,000.

A house mentioned in *Le Retour Imprévu* (I, 12) is worth 30,000 francs, or $21,000.

Still another house situated in the Faubourg St. Germain and mentioned in *Crispin, Rival de Son Maître* (I, 15) is worth 80,000 francs, or $56,000. In this same play the chateau (I, 15) of a tax collector is represented at a value of 150,000 francs or $105,000.

According to Levasseur,[2] the average price of houses in Paris during this period varied as follows:

1651-1675	40,500 francs
1676-1700	32,000
1701-1725	22,740

The above values mentioned by the dramatists, therefore, do not seem out of line.

The value of the actual real estate of the Priory de Teil, mentioned in *Le Mariage de Fine Epice* (III, 5), is not given, but the yearly income from the Priory is set at four hundred écus, or $840. If this represented a return of six percent on the capital, it would place the value of the Priory at $14,000.

A duchy mentioned in *Le Banqueroutier* (Scène du Notaire) is worth from 500,000 to 600,000 francs $350,000 to $420,000. If one makes a comparison with an actual evaluation of a duchy of

[2] R. Levasseur, *Les Prix. Aperçu de l'Histoire Economique de la Valeur et du Revenu de la Terre*, p. 61.

that period, the duchy of Magny, near Compiègne, was reputed in 1698 to be worth 740,000 francs.[3] The figure for the value of the duchy mentioned in *Le Banqueroutier* seems, therefore, to be fairly accurate. The " terre de Lorgnac " belonging to the Marquis of *La Comtesse d'Orgueil* (II, 1) is reputed to be worth 600,000 francs, or $420,000.

The barony of Boistortu mentioned in *Les Bourgeoises de Qualité* (III, 8) is worth considerably less—40,000 francs, or $28,000.

A piece of land in Chartres mentioned in *Crispin, Rival de son Maître* (I, 15) is worth 180,000 francs, or $126,000.

Salaries

If one is to rely on the evidence found in French comedy during the reign of Louis XIV, it would appear that servants were never paid. In two instances, we learn, however, of amounts owed, but there is no record of payment, or even the promise of payment.

A valet in *Attendez-moi Sous l'Orme* (1694), I, 1, is owed six hundred francs for eight years services, or $420.00 ($52.50 per year). The valet in *Le Joueur* (1697), III, 4, fared a little better, for he was owed five hundred francs ten sous for five years wages, or $70.07 per year. But again, he was never paid. A valet in the employ of a tax collector in *La Cause des Femmes* (1687), in La Scène du More, seems to have received the top wages during the period. Here the salary is fifty écus, or about $105.00 for the year.

According to Levasseur, the average yearly wage paid to domestic servants was 69 francs in 1650, 82 francs in 1675 and 71 francs in 1700.[4] It would appear, therefore, that the wages cited by the dramatists reflect fairly well the actual situation.

The village " tabellion " in *Les Bourgeoises de Qualité* (II, 5) was paid from thirty to forty francs yearly—$21.00 to $28.00.

A distributor of hand bills in *Lubin, ou le Sot Vengé* (I, 5) was paid two sous a day—about seven cents.

[3] Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

[4] E. Levasseur, *Les Prix. Aperçu de l'Histoire Economique de la Valeur et du Revenu de la Terre*, p. 47.

A group of singers were paid 20 écus or $42.00 to provide entertainment in *Les Bourgeoises de Qualité* (II, 1).

A dancing master in *Le Divorce* (I, 6) wants half a louis a lesson, or about $3.75. This was considered high and mention is made that formerly such lessons were paid for at the rate of three écus a month, $6.30. Two years of music lessons cost fifty louis in *La Joueuse* (II, 9), or roughly $385.00. In *Le Banqueroutier* (Scène du Maistre à Chanter), similar lessons cost three louis, or about $23.10 a month.

Food

The following costs throw some light on the prices of food:

In *Le Vert Galant* (I, 13) a pheasant is worth 12 francs, $8.40; two partridges, 9 francs 10 sous, $6.65; a river bird and a snipe, 13 francs, $9.10.

In *Le Moulin de Javelle* (I, 18), a meal at an inn for two people is worth 15 francs, $10.50; a fish stew for two people cost 6 francs, $4.20. Crayfish for two people were a little cheaper, $3.50. In this same play (I, 10) mention is made of a meal costing three pistoles, or $23.10.

Food for a "femme du monde" for a year in *L'Avare* (II, 6) is set at three thousand francs, or $2,100.00, which seems rather high, but Frosine is evidently exaggerating.

A meal in a "petite auberge" in *La Rapinière* (V, 1) costs five sous, or about eighteen cents.

A bottle of champagne in *Les Mœurs du Temps* (I, 7) costs thirty six sous, or about $1.26. A comment is added in the play that this price is cheap because of the good harvest that year.

A restaurant bill in *Le Galant Jardinier* (I, 15) for a supper given for several people amounted to 182 francs, 10 sous, or $127.75. This included "Deux potages, huit entrées, un marcassin, six perdrix, une douzaine de cailles, quatre gelinottes de bois."

Actually the average price of a meal at an inn varied in francs from 1651 to 1725 as follows:[5]

1651-1675	.68
1765-1700	1.06
1701-1725	.93

[5] Levasseur, *Les Prix. Aperçu de l'Histoire Economique de la Valeur et du Revenu de la Terre*, p. 71.

General food prices are found reflected in a statement made in 1661 by the directors of the Hôpital Général in reply to a charge that the ecclesiastics attached to it were not being properly fed. This statement lists in great detail the food bought for the ecclesiastics and the prices paid therefore: [6]

		Livres	*Sous*	*Deniers*
1	Dozen Eggs		15	
2	pounds Lard		18	
2	Pounds Butter		17	
2	Pints Milk		10	
1	Hen and 1 Pullet	1	13	
24	Sheep's Tongues	3	12	
6	Capons and 1 Turkey	12		
13	Bunches of Asparagus	9		
12	Cheeses (Pont l'Evêque)	1	10	
2	½ Bushels Peas	8		
65	Artichokes	7	15	
9	Bunches Lettuce	2	10	
1	Bushel Beans	2	15	2
3	Pounds Currants		15	
48	Sheep's Feet	1	12	

The meal mentioned in *La Rapinière* (1682) which costs five sous at a "petite auberge" must therefore have been at a very cheap and second rate inn, as the designation implies. The high prices mentioned in the other passages include fowl or fish. As can be seen from the statement of the directors of the Hôpital Général, the prices of capons, turkeys, and other fowl were comparatively high.

A day's supply of bread in *Les Aventures et le Mariage de Panurge* (II, 4) costs two sous, o rabout seven cents.

If we are to accept evidence in Chappuzeau's *Colin-Maillard,* a loaf of bread was sold at one sou or three and one half cents, which does not seem out of line in comparison with other prices. In this particular instance (I, 15) the financiers are blamed for the bad bread situation:

Il est plus cher que dans la guerre,
Le grain ou s'enleue, ou s'enterre
Et ces messieurs les boulangers
Font leurs pains d'vn sol si legers,

---

[6] Charles W. Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism*, I, p. 273.

Que les vingt ne font que la liure,
Desormais, quel moyen de viure!
Ma foy, ce n'est pas sur le pain
Que nous pouuons faire du gain,
Et le treiziéme qu'on nous donne
N'a iamais enrichi personne.
Plaignez-vous des Monopoleurs,
Le Diable emporte les Voleurs;
Ce n'est pas la terre qui manque
Le mal vient de ces gens de banque.

The price of wine is mentioned in *Les Aventures et le Mariage de Panurge* (II, 4) as "six blancs la pinte" (two and one half sous), or eight and one half cents.

Dowries

The largest dowry for which a specific amount is stated in the comedy of the period is that of a Marquise in *L'Important de Cour* (II, 2). The dowry of this Marquise amounted to 200,000 francs, plus a yearly income of 20,000 francs, or $140,000 plus an income of $14,000. Another Marquise mentioned in *Le Chevalier Joueur* (III, 11) possessed a dowry of 150,000 francs, or $105,000. A dowry in *Le Banqueroutier* (Scène des Ambassadeurs) mentioned as "le fait d'un homme de robe" amounted to 300,000 francs, or $210,000. The widow of a wealthy merchant in *La Femme d'Intrigues* (II, 6) is mentioned as having a dowry of 25,000 francs income a year, or about the equivalent of a capital of 400,000 francs, or $280,000. A dowry suitable for a marriage with a lawyer is given in *Le Concert Ridicule* (I, 2) as 90,000 francs, or $63,000.

In *Le Mariage de Fine Epice* (II, 1) the daughter of a public executioner is given 44,000 francs, or $30,800. In *Attendez-Moi Sous L'Orme* (I, 9) the peasant girl, Agathe, has a dowry of 60,000 francs, or $42,000. Another peasant girl, Colette, in *Le Mari Retrouvé* (I, 2), has a dowry of 20,000 francs, or $14,000.

There are also a great many other references to dowries of the bourgeoisie, whose exact stations in life are not made clear. These will be found in a table in the Appendix.

Furetière, in his *Roman Bourgeois,*[7] had set up a table of

[7] Furetière, *Roman Bourgeois*, p. 33.

suitable dowries for certain ranks of society. In this "Tariffe ou Evaluation des partis sortables pour faire facilement les mariages," the amount set for a Marquis is 300,000-600,000 francs; for an "homme de robe" 150,000-300,000; for a lawyer 6,000-20,000 francs. No dowries are suggested for the peasantry. The dowries in the upper brackets as presented by Furetière follow fairly closely the amounts stipulated by the dramatists for similar levels of society. The lower bracket dowries, however, are larger than the corresponding dowries suggested by Furetière. Perhaps the dowries mentioned in this instance by the dramatists were unusually large, and the smaller ones were considered too insignificant to mention.

Lawsuit Costs

There are many references to litigation in the Courts of various sorts and in a few instances, the amounts involved are stated.

In a lawsuit in *Le Négligent* (Prologue, 4) some 200,000 francs or $140,000 are involved. In another lawsuit in *Les Plaintes du Palais* (I, 11) 100,000 francs or $70,000 are involved.

Litigation costs in *La Comédie Sans Titre* (V, 7) amounted at first to 730 francs, or $511.00, which were subsequently reduced to 34 francs, or $23.80.

Similar costs in *La Matrone d'Ephèse* (Scène de l'Etude) are 800 francs, $560.00.

A lawsuit involving 3,000 francs ($2,100.00) carried with it 9,000 francs ($6,3000.00) costs in *Le Batteau de Bouille* (I, 7).

Bribes, Bets and Tips

In general it would appear that the amounts involved in seventeenth century bribes were not large. For example, the price of a gangster in *La Rue St. Denis* (I, 4) is put at only four louis, $30.80. To bribe LaMouche in the same play (I, 11), the price is only four pistoles, or $30.80.

A bribe for lying in *Le Joueur* (IV, 2) cost one hundred francs, or $70.00. A bribe to steal a purse in *Le Divorce* (II, 1) cost one hundred ten francs, or $77.00. Aymée in *Les Femmes Coquettes* (II, 7) was paid three hundred francs, or $210.00, for spying. A bribe to put a love letter in a lottery cost 10 louis, or $77.00 in *La Loterie* (I, 13).

Two bribes to help bring about a marriage are mentioned in

Les Bains de la Porte St. Bernard (I, 3) and *Attendez-moi Sous l'Orme* (I, 9). In both cases, the amounts are 1,100 francs, $770.00.

Bets were made for varying amounts, but never exceeded three thousand francs.

Tips varied from thirty sous to thirty pistoles.

Lists of specific bets and tips will be found in the Appendix.

MISCELLANEOUS

Lists of the various references found in French comedy under the reign of Louis XIV pertaining to the value of clothing, forfeits, furniture, gambling losses and winnings, inheritances, jewelry and miscellaneous references not fitting into any of these categories will be found in the Appendix of this study.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

The main purpose that money serves in French comedy under Louis XIV is to add realism to that comedy. This is achieved by introducing the tax collectors, gamblers, usurers, counterfeiters, promoters of get-rich-quick schemes and "femmes d'intrigues" who were so active during the reign of Louis XIV, and depicting their practices upon the stage.

Entire plays were built around one particular aspect of this role of money. *Turcaret* (the ruin of a partisan), *Le Banqueroutier* (fraudulent bankruptcy), *La Loterie* (Lotteries), *Le Joueur* (the evil effects of gambling) and *La Femme d'Intrigues* (the business woman of the period) are cases in point.

From a study of the comedy it is possible to gain an excellent picture of the complex social and economic life of the period from 1661 to 1715 during which money played such an important role. Society in general was corrupt and cynical. Money was the driving force among all classes. The peasant and the lackey, seeing the great fortunes and their display on all sides, hoped to rise, and frequently did. The peasant was handicapped by lack of education, but the lackey obtained his in his master's service, and sharpened his wits in the intrigue in which he was constantly involved. The rise of the lackey to a high financial position through various clerkships in a tax collector's office, and finally to that of tax collector himself, was a familiar procedure in those plays dealing with them. Turcaret, La Rapinière, Rapineau and M. Simon all followed this path. Once this position and wealth were assured, the tax collector sought an alliance through marriage with the nobility. Sometimes a reaction of extravagance and profligacy set in against the years of hard work and saving, but the general tendency was to continue the hard heartedness and sharp business practices which had made the acquisition of the fortune possible. There is no doubt regarding his high position in society, although there are many references in comedy to the insecurity of such a position. Money could be lost as easily as it was earned, and in the case of the tax collector, there was always the danger of some

heavy tax imposed by the King. But the position of the tax collector was not an unhappy one. His class possessed the greatest fortunes of the time, at a period when money was all powerful. He had splendid estates and could indulge in whatever passion he desired. Usually this inclination was for women, either of the nobility or younger than himself, but sometimes it was for gambling, usury, or music and the arts in a superficial manner. The financier was often a patron of letters, and plays were dedicated to him. The plays dealing with tax collectors also reveal methods of collecting and avoiding taxes, methods of dealing with employees, and other aspects of the daily routine of a tax collector's office.

Bankruptcy, actual and fraudulent, was prevalent on all sides. There are a few references to actual bankruptcies. French comedy at this time was more concerned with fraudulent bankruptcies. *La Rue St. Denis* is the first play to deal with this subject, although *Le Banqueroutier,* appearing a few years later, deals more completely with it, and the fraudulent bankruptcy presented is more essential to the plot. In this latter play, the exact procedure of transferring funds, duping the creditors with a false statement of assets, and finally escaping, is fully developed.

The gambling craze is presented with great completeness of detail. Valère, the gambler of Regnard's *Le Joueur* and Mme Orgon, of DuFresny's *La Joueuse,* characterize the gambling-mad male and female respectively. Gambling games in progress are depicted in the comedies and methods of playing and cheating given. Women in particular in the seventeenth century were the great gamblers. They frequently made use of "le jeu" to explain gifts from their lovers as gambling winnings when husbands became too curious. It also provided them with a place to meet their lovers and furnished an excuse to husbands to account for a rendez-vous with a lover. The effects of the Government decrees prohibiting gambling are discussed, particularly in *La Désolation des Joueuses.*

The development of the "femme d'intrigues" from a role as a marriage broker to that of a business woman, dealing not only in marriages, but loans, positions, and fortune telling, can be traced in French comedy. Frosine of *L'Avare* and Clarine of *Les Intrigues de la Lotterie* are two early matrimonial agents, Mme Jobin

of *La Devineresse* and Mme Thibaut of *La Femme d'Intrigues* are two later characterizations of the marriage go-between. The change in the dramatist's conception of the character, paralleling the change in her position in French Society from 1661 to 1715, is tremendous. Whereas Frosine and Clarine are interested mainly in arranging marriages, Mme Jobin and Mme Thibaut have enlarged the scope of their activities to include everything from black magic to running a pawn shop.

Usury flourished under the reign of Louis XIV despite the hostile attitude of the Catholic church. Usurers and their practices were freely used by dramatists in their plays. Molière's well-known Harpagon was followed in the years 1661-1715 by a series of similar characters, and their exorbitant rates, ingenious contracts and dealings in "agiotage" furnish an interesting study of manners. Dancourt's *Les Agioteurs* furnishes the best study of such manners. From the view point of depicting the technicalities involved in making money, it is, in fact, the most important money play of the period.

The desire to get rich quickly with no effort on the part of the investor caused the Parisian public to be excellent prospects for the various schemes and projects advanced by promoters. Plans to interest the public in investing their money in an enterprise to increase the number of French sea-ports (*Les Fâcheux*), a scheme to promote the more rapid circulation of gold throughout Europe and Asia (*Sir Politick Would-Be*), a project to bring the water of the Ourcq River to Paris and to sell it (*Le Banqueroutier*), the tontine (*La Tontine*), and the perennial alchemy (*Les Souffleurs*) are all unveiled in French comedy. These schemes only reflected projects, equally as nebulous, with which promoters were duping the French populace.

Another aspect of the get-rich-quick scheme was the lottery. The operations of these institutions are disclosed in great detail in *Les Intrigues de la Lotterie* and particularly in two plays entitled *La Loterie,* one by Caillet and the other by Dancourt. Rules for their successful operation are suggested and methods of trickery exposed.

Counterfeiters and the prevalence of their false and short weight coins are referred to frequently. No one play, however, deals with them as a group, although *Le Mariage de Fine Epice* and *Les Souffleurs* give some of their secrets.

Dramatists frequently introduced business contracts and methods into their plays. *La Matrone d'Ephèse* furnishes a study of manners in a law office. *Le Marchand Duppé* performs a similar service for a merchant's establishment.

Recruiting practices are discussed in *La Fille Savante* and *Les Plaintes du Palais.* An attack against the dowry system occurs in *Philipin Sentinelle.* Annulment of the marriage contract and the arrangement for alimony are portrayed in *Le Divorce.*

There was an interest in manners in the latter part of the seventeenth century which did not exist even at the time of Molière. Dramatists turned to the contemporary scene for inspiration and material for their plays. The result was the presentation of a greater number of comedies of manners and fewer comedies of character. Any study of manners in the latter part of the seventeenth century was bound to include some manifestation of money, which was so prevalent in the national life. Hence, money played an important role in the transition of the comedy of character to that of manners.

Writers of seventeenth century comedy were not primarily concerned with moralizing. This was left to the great preachers of the time, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Fléchier, Mascaron, and Massillon, and to satirists like La Bruyère. However, dramatists in their plays depicted the evil effects of vice. Regnard in his *Le Joueur* succeeds in portraying the utter futuility of the gambling passion with its loss of money, character, and love interest. Corneille and de Visé's *La Devineresse* exposes the tricks of the fortune tellers and "femmes d'intrigues." It could not have increased the clientele of these parasites, and probably detracted from it. The various means of cheating through lotteries are put before the public in several plays and certainly could not have made the lottery a more popular institution. In no small manner, therefore, comedy under Louis XIV brought home to the Parisian public many of the abuses of the day, and, if that public was not already cognizant of them, brought about a fuller realization of the true state of affairs. It can thus be said that the comedy did have a moralistic and didactic value, perhaps even greater than that of the eminent churchmen of the day. The latter tended to intimidate the faithful with threats of fire and brimstone, while the dramatists set the situation clearly before their audiences and let them draw their own con-

clusions. Santeul's [1] "Castigat ridendo mores" strikes the keynote of the function of comedy during the period. This, of course, was only continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Money and its ramifications were the occasion for a great deal of humor and satire. One of the clever devices used was to designate characters by names particularly suggestive of the bad qualities of the characters themselves. This was extremely prevalent throughout the whole period. Financiers are called Turcaret (*Turcaret*), Grippon (*Esope*), Griffard (*La Foire de Beson*) and Griffet (*Esope à la Cour*). Tax collectors are named Sotinet (*Le Divorce*) and Tire Partout (*La Cause des Femmes*). An agioteur is given the name of Cangrène (*Les Agioteurs*). A scoundrel is called Tiresou (*Le Batteau de Bouille*). A lawyer is given the name M. de la Ressource (*Le Banqueroutier*), which is used again to denote a "femme d'intrigues," Mme Ressource, in *Le Joueur*.

Certain financial institutions of the seventeenth century served dramatists as accessories to their plots and aided in the development of the intrigue. Three plays made such a use of lotteries. In de Visé's *Les Intrigues de la Lotterie*, the lottery furnishes a place where the hero and heroine may meet. In Montfleury's *Le Gentilhomme de Beauce*, the heroine makes up a lottery in the hope it will attract people to the house, and so help her get in touch with her lover, Léandre. In DuFresny's *La Coquette de Village* a fake lottery list is employed to outwit a farmer and in this way advance a marriage. Molière made use of a pretended bankruptcy in *Les Femmes Savantes* to break up the marrfage of Trissotin and Henriette.

In recapitulation, therefore, the role of money in French comedy during the reign of Louis XIV can be said to (1) add realism by drawing upon the contemporary scene for characters and studies of manners involving money, (2) by emphasizing manners instead of character in comedy to furnish a means of transition from the comedy of character to that of manners, (3) to supply an element of satire and humor to comedy, (4) to attack excesses and vice indirectly through the theatre and (5) to provide, at times, an accessory to advance the intrigue of the plot.

[1] Attributed by H. P. Jones to Santeul in his Dictionary of Foreign Phrases and Classical Quotations.

APPENDIX

Tables of references in French Comedy under Louis XIV, which throw light on values or prices under the following headings:

Bets and Tips 125
Dowries 126
Clothing 126
Estates of the Bourgeoisie 127
Forfeits 128
Furniture and House Furnishings 128
Gambling Losses and Winnings 128
Inheritances 129
Jewelry 129
Miscellaneous 130

BETS AND TIPS

Bets involving specific sums are mentioned as follows:

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Le Café (I, 1)	1,100	770.00
La Maison de Campagne (I, 24)	110	77.00
L'Impromptu de Versailles (I, 3)	1,100	770.00
La Joueuse Dupée (I, 5)	3,000	2,100.00

Tips varied from 30 sous to 30 pistoles, and are as follows:

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
L'Ecole des Femmes (III, 1)	6	4.20
Les Mœurs du Temps (IV, 2)	110	77.00
Les Carosses d'Orleans (I, 26)	22	15.40
Le Banqueroutier [1]	3	2.10
Le Marchand Duppé (I, 4)	1½	1.05
	3	2.10
Colombine, Femme Vengée (I, 5)	330	231.00
Les Trois Cousines (Prol. 3)	1½	1.05
Le Double Veuvage (I, 1)	300	210.00
Le Carnaval de Lyon (I, 8)	22	15.40
L'Eté Des Coquettes (I, 3)	100	70.00
Ibid. (I, 4)	11	7.70

[1] Scène du Portier.

DOWRIES

Those dowries not mentioned above pp. 117-118.

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
La Matrome d'Ephèse [2]	300,000	210,000.00
La Femme d'Intrigues (I, 2)	300,000	210,000.00
La Folle Enchère (I, 22)	210,000	147,000.00
La Cause des Femmes (I, 1) Mme de Bassemine	200,000	140,000.00
Attendez-moi Sous l'Orme (I, 9) Veuve	150,000	105,000.00
Les Mariages Inopinés (III, 2) Mme Harpagon	120,000	84,000.00
Les Mariages Inopinés (IV, 5)	100,000	70,000.00
La Femme D'Intrigues (II, 6) one of Mme Thibaut's clients	100,000	70,000.00
Les Curieux de Compiègne (I, 5)	90,000	63,000.00
La Dame Médecin (I, 2)	90,000	63,000.00
La Loterie (Dancourt) (I, 18)	75,000	52,500.00
Le Café (I, 4) Louison	60,000	42,000.00
La Loterie de Scapin (I, 1)	60,000	42,000.00
Les Bourgeoises à la Mode (V, 14) Mme Anselme's son	60,000	42,000.00
La Joueuse (IV, 2) Orgon's daughter	60,000	42,000.00
Le Divorce (III, 6) Mme Sotinet	60,000	42,000.00
Philipin Sentinelle (I, 3)	60,000	42,000.00
Le Mariage de Fine Epice (II, 1) fille d'un bourreau	44,000	30,800.00
Attendez-moi Sous l'Orme (I, 1) Fermière Agathe	30,000	21,000.00
Le Mari Retrouvé (I, 2) peasant girl Colette	20,000	14,000.00

Plays	*Francs Rente*	*Dollars*
Le Négligent (II, 9)	75,000	52,500.00
La Comtesse d'Orgeuil (II, 1)	30,000	21,000,00
La Femme D'Intrigues (II, 6) one of Mme Thibaut's clients	25,000	17,500.00
(I, 1)	12,000	8,400.00
Comédie Sans Titre (V, 2) Mme de Boisluisant's daughter	12,000	8,400.00

CLOTHING

Some references to the value of clothing follow:

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Les Intrigues de la Vieille Tour—coat (I, 9)	12	8.40
boots (I, 9)	3	2.10

[2] Scène de l'Etude.

La Femme d'Intrigues (III, 8)—scarf	165	115.50
L'Avare (II, 6)—		
clothes for a "femme du monde" for a year	4,000	2,800.00
L'Avare (I, 5)—		
wig and ribbons on Harpagon's son	220	154.00
La Femme Juge et Partie (III, 2)—2 wigs	110	77.00
La Fille Savante [3]—Fur embroidered bonnet	30	21.00
Les Bains de la Porte St. Bernard (I, 6)—		
galons d'or	1,100	77.00
Le Divorce (III, 1)—a 'juste-au-Corps'	660	462.00
Le Divorce—a mediocre 'habit' (I, 7)	550-660	(385.00
		(462.00
Les Mots à la Mode (I, 15)—apron	40	28.00
Ibid. (I, 15)—lace cuffs	300	210.00
Ibid. (I, 15)—robe de chambre	121	84.70
Ibid. (I, 15)—a coiffure and two corsets	165	115.50
Les Bourgeoises à la Mode (I, 7)—dress maker's bill		
"pour l'idée d'une coiffure extraordinaire"	310	217.00
La Bourgeoise Madame—brocard per yard (III, 2)	165	115.50
L'Avocat Patelin (I, 6)—cloth per yard	18	12.60

ESTATES OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Various fortunes of the bourgeoisie (not cited above, pp. 111-113 ff.) are mentioned as follows:

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Les Enfants de Paris (I, 7)	6,000 (income)	4,200.00
Le Deuil (I, 4)	150,000	105,000.00
Crispin Gentilhomme (I, 6)	600,000	420,000.00
Le Marchand Duppé (I, 6)	100,000 (income)	70,000.00
Ibid. (I, 6)	60,000 (income)	42,000.00
La Fille Savante [4]	600,000	420,000.00
	30,000 (income)	21,000.00
La Fille Savante [5]	150,000	105,000.00
Esope (IV, 6)	300,000	210,000.00
Les Mariages Inopinés (II, 4)	15,000 (income)	10,500.00
La Loterie (Caillet) (I, 3)	600,000	420,000.00
Les Bourgeoises de Qualité (I, 2)	30,000 (income)	21,000.00
Ibid. (II, 7)	300,000	210,000.00
Le Faux Honnête Homme (II, 4)	500,000	350,000.00
L'Héritier Imaginaire (I, 5)	24,000 (income)	16,800.00

[3] Scène de l'Enrollement.
[4] Scène de la Consultation.
[5] Scène de Tortillon et Pierrot.

FORFEITS

The "dédit" or forfeit which occurs frequently in comedy was a stipulated sum due by the party who failed to carry out the terms of an agreement. The amounts varied from ten thousand to sixty thousand francs.

"Dédits" are mentioned as follows:

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Le Parisien (III, 3)	12,000	8,400.00
Merlin Dragon (I, 1)	20,000	14,000.00
Les Bourgeoises de Qualité (IV, 4)	60,000	42,000.00
L'Avocat Patelin (III, 13)	30,000	21,000.00
L'Usurier Gentilhomme (I, 14)	60,000	42,000.00
Les Coups du Hazard (I, 2)	12,000	8,400.00
Le Flatteur (III, 2)	10,000	7,000.00
La Comtesse d'Orgueil (II, 3)	30,000	21,000.00
L'Ambigu Comique[6]	30,000	21,000.00

FURNITURE AND HOUSE FURNISHINGS

There are not a great many references to furniture and house furnishings which show the actual value in francs of such articles. However, the following is a list of a variety of pieces whose values were definitely stated:

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
La Loterie (Dancourt) (I, 20)—Clock	1,500	1,050.00
Le Dépit Amoureux (IV, 4)—Knife	2½	1.75
Les Intrigues de la Lotterie (I, 9)—Mirror	1,100	770.00
Le Retour Imprévu (I, 20)—Tapestry	6,000	4,200.00
Ibid. (I, 4)—Two Large Paintings	1,800	1,260.00
La Bourgeoise Madame (II, 4)—Silverware	4,400	3,080.00
Merlin Gascon (I, 17)—Tapestry	5,500	3,850.00
Turcaret (IV, 1)—To furnish a country house	10,000	7,000.00

GAMBLING LOSSES AND WINNINGS

There are several references to gambling losses and a few to amounts won.

The losses include:

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Le Chevalier Joueur (II, 3)—	5,500	3,850.00
On three consecutive days	13,200	9,240.00
	11,000	7,700.00
Les Agioteurs (II, 4)	6,000	4,200.00

[6] *Dom Pasquin d'Avalos* (I, 12).

La Joueuse Dupée (I, 4)	220	154.00
L'Avare (II, 6)		
Losses for a "femme du monde" in one year	20,000	14,000.00
Les Femmes Coquettes (I, 7)	8,000	5,600.00
Ibid. (II, 4)—In two days	4,000	2,800.00
Le Banqueroutier [7]	10,000	7,000.00
Colombine, Femme Vengée (III, 7)—on one card	33,000	23,100.00
Ibid. (III, 7)	60,000	42,000.00
Les Bourgeois de Qualité (I, 5)	250	175.00
La Cause des Femmes [8]—in one evening	30,000	21,000.00

The winnings, much fewer in number, include:

La Loterie (Caillet) (II, 3)—at tric trac	1,100	770.00
La Cause des Femmes [9]—at one stroke	9,900	6,930.00

INHERITANCES

There is an occasional reference to an inheritance. Those mentioned are:

Play	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Les Ménechmes (I, 2)	180,000	126,000.00
La Femme d'Intrigues (I, 1)	60,000	42,000.00
La Comtesse d'Orgueil (II, 1)	300,000	210,000.00
Le Feint Polonais (II, 12)	40,000	28,000.00
Les Bains de la Porte St. Bernard (II, 2)	40,000	28,000.00
Le Concert Ridicule (I, 11)	10,000 (income)	7,000.00
La Femme d'Intrigues (Cléante (I, 1), Capitaine d'Infanterie)—income	25,000	17,500.00

JEWELRY

In a period when great wealth was in the hands of a few and an ultra-luxurious mode of living set up as an example by the King, jewelry, particularly diamonds, was bound to be in vogue.

The value of single diamonds under Louis XIV, reflected in plays, is as follows:

Plays	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Le Moulin de Javelle (I, 24)	3,000	2,100.00
La Femme d'Intrigues (II, 6)	1,100	770.00
Ibid. (IV, 12)	165	115.50
La Comédie Sans Titre (I, 2)	880	616.00
La Matrone d'Ephèse [10]	220	154.00
Les Mœurs du Temps (II, 10)	3,000	2,100.00

[7] Scène du Financier.
[8] Scène de M. Tuetout et de Colombine.
[9] Scène de l'Exposition du Sujet.
[10] Scène de l'Etude.

Le Marchand Duppé (II, 6)	1,500	1,050.00
La Loterie (Dancourt) (I, 3)	2,000	1,400.00
Le Divorce (III, 6)	1,500	1,050.00
Merlin Gascon (I, 17)	1,100	770.00
Turcaret (I, 2)	5,500	3,850.00
Le Café (I, 12)	1,500	1,050.00

The value of rings is as follows:

Le Parisien (V, 4)	3,000	2,100.00
Le Banqueroutier [11]	6,000	4,200.00
Merlin Gascon (I, 17)	1,500	1,050.00

A watch worth 12 pistoles ($92.40) is mentioned in *La Matrone d'Ephèse,*[12] and another watch worth 30 louis ($231.00) in *Le Feint Polonais* (II, 16).

Sundry articles of jewelry are mentioned as follows:

Play	*Article*	*Francs*	*Dollars*
La Loterie (D.) (I, 20)	Diamond cross	2,200	1,540.00
Les Enfants de Paris (I, 2)	Diamond necklace	12,000	8,400.00
La Sérénade (I, 6)	Necklace	3,800	2,660.00
Les Mots à la Mode (I, 15)	Jeweled clasp	800	560.00
Loc. cit.	Lace with small diamonds	2,400	1,680.00
La Désolation des Joueuses (I, 6)	Necklace	3,000	2,100.00
La Bourgeoise Madame (V, 10)	Earrings	1,100	770.00
Turcaret (IV, 10)	Necklace	1,500	1,050.00
Les Momies d'Egypte (I, 8)	Necklace	3,000	2,100.00

MISCELLANEOUS

Sundry references of general interest which do not fall readily into any of the previously mentioned categories are:

La Tontine (I, 3)	Share in the Tontine	10,000	7,000.00
La Fausse Coquette (II, 3)	To postman for delivery of a letter	3 sous	.10
Colombine, Femme Vengée (I, 1)	Postage from Orléans	3 sous	.10

[11] Scène du Financier.

[12] Scène de l'Etude.

Play	*Article*	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Les Fourberies de Scapin (II, 11)	Ransom price	500 écus	1,050.00
Le Moulin de Javelle (I, 2)	Fiacre fare	1 écu	2.10
La Loterie (D.) (I, 5)	16 lottery tickets	4 louis	30.80
Les Intrigues de la Lotterie (II, 6)	Lottery ticket	10	7.00
Ibid. (I, 7)	Lottery ticket	2 louis	15.40
Le Gentilhomme de Beauce (IV, 4)	12 Lottery tickets	20 louis	154.00
La Loterie de Scapin (I, 1)	Lottery tickets	3 louis	23.10
La Coquette de Village (I, 1)	Gros lot de la Loterie	100,000	70,000.00
Le Gentilhomme de Beauce (III, 6)	Lottery Prize	300 louis	2,310.00
La Femmes d'Intrigues (I, 4)	Fee to dupe an Infantry Captain	100 pistoles	770.00
Ibid. (II, 1)	To recruit 12 men for the Army	2,000 écus	4,200.00
Ibid. (V, 10)	Apothecary's medicine	4	2.80
Ibid. (V, 10)	Doctor's Fee	250	175.00
Ibid. (V, 1)	Carpenter's fee for trap door in alcove	10 pistoles	77.00
Les Curieux de Compiègne	Price per head to sleep on straw litter in stable	20 sous	.70
Les Fâcheux (III, 3)	Casual Loan	2 pistoles	15.40
Ibid. (II, 7)	Hunting Horse	100 pistoles	770.00
Les Fourberies de Scapin ((II, 8)	Cheval de service	60 pistoles	462.00
Ibid. (II, 8)	Harness and Pistols	20 pistoles	154.00
Ibid. (II, 8)	Horse for Valet	30 pistoles	231.00
Les Femmes Coquettes (II, 5)	Horses	200 louis	1,540.00
Les Mœurs du Temps (III, 4)	Carriage and Horses	1,800	1,260.00
L'Avare Dupé [13]	Fine for Infringing on Copyright by King	2.000	1,400.00
L'Après-Soupé des Auberges (I, 6)	To present a comedy	100 pistoles	770.00

[13] Privilège du Roy.

Play	*Article*	*Francs*	*Dollars*
Le Malade Imaginaire (I, 1)	Medecines from Apothecary	10 sous 35 sous	.35 1.23
La Comédie Sans Titre (II, 7)	1,000 Funeral Announcements	3 louis	23.10
Ibid. (II, 2)	Author's Yearly income from sale of books	10,000	7,000.00
La Matrone d'Ephèse [14]	Yearly income from law practice	3,000	2,100.00
Loc. cit.	Tour du Bâton connected with same	1,000 pistoles	7,700.00
Les Femmes Coquettes (I, 1)	Pot de Pomade	10 louis	77.00
Le Banqueroutier (Prologue)	Price of admission to amphithéâtre	20 sous	.70
Ibid.[15]	Yearly personal expenses for Mme Persillet	25,000	17,500.00
Ulisse et Circé (I, 3)	Present to a woman by a man	500 louis	3,850.00
Les Bains de la Porte St. Bernard [16]	A Portrait	30 pistoles	231.00
Ibid. (II, 3)	Fiole de médecine	50 pistoles	385.00
Attendez-moi Sous L'Orme (I, 9)	Price of a Regiment	20,000 écus	42,000.00
Le Divorce (II, 4)	A Sword	60 louis	462.00
Ibid. (III, 6)	Yearly alimony	3,000	2,100.00
Le Coquet Trompé (Prol. 11)	Price of a Loge	4 louis	30.80
Le Feint Nécromancien (III, 7)	Paid for release from a desertion charge	30,000	21,000.00
Le Carnaval de Lyon (Frontispiece)	For copy of *Le Carnaval de Lyon*	12 sous	.42
Le Galant Jardinier (I, 6)	Reward for Missing Person	30 pistoles	231.00
Turcaret (IV, 7)	Equipage (10 mules, 15 Norman horses, 30 other horses and harnesses)	10,000	7,000.00

[14] Scène du Vieux Procureur.
[15] Scène de Persillet et Colombine.
[16] Scène du Procureur.

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